Celebrating BRIT SHALOM

LISA BRAVER MOSS AND REBECCA WALD
Music by Reuben Moss and Jason Paige

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THRIFTBOOKS

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Lisa Braver Moss and Rebecca Wald

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First Edition

Child's Name

Date of Birth

Date of Brit Shalom

Baby's
Photo
Here

Dedicated with utmost appreciation to the parents and rabbis who have composed their own *brit shalom* ceremonies and shared them informally through a network of like-minded families. Their bravery, creativity, and commitment to Jewish practice continue to inspire us.

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A Message to Parents

If you're expecting a son, *b'sha-ah tovah*! If he has already arrived, *mazal tov*! The birth of a baby is one of life's most joyous moments. It also can be a wonderful opportunity for families to affirm, renew—or discover—their spiritual connection to the Jewish people.

Today a growing number of families are choosing *brit shalom*, a ceremony for Jewish newborn boys whose parents have decided not to circumcise them. *Brit shalom* is a beautiful way to celebrate the birth of your son and to honor your heritage. It's a joyous event for all involved—including the baby.

Many assume the term *brit* (or more commonly *bris*) means "circumcision," but it actually means "covenant" or "agreement." Every *bris* ceremony recalls God's biblical promise to Abraham to stand with the Jewish people and protect them. During *brit milah*, a *mohel* circumcises the infant as a sign of the covenant. During

brit shalom, the covenant is recognized without circumcision. In both, the baby is formally welcomed into the rich culture of Judaism and given his Hebrew name. A festive meal follows.

Parents and progressive rabbis have been crafting their own *brit shalom* ceremonies for some time. Until now, however, there has been no book about *brit shalom*. Within these pages you'll find three complete services, each with its own theme. We've designed them to be family-led or rabbi-led depending on your preference and circumstances. We've also included practical advice about planning the *bris* (yes, *bris*, in its original meaning—a covenant ceremony).

Especially in progressive movements of Judaism, rabbis are increasingly open to *brit shalom*. So if you're already a member of a congregation, consider asking the rabbi to officiate. If you're not a member, now is a great time to become affiliated with a synagogue. This can be an important step in building community and creating a home in which your family's Jewish identity is honored and passed along to future generations.

Jewish communities have long had special ways of blessing newborn girls, and naming ceremonies for daughters are increasingly popular. These are often referred to as a *brit bat* (covenant for a daughter) or *simchat bat* (celebration for a daughter). While we've written *Celebrating Brit Shalom* with the

parents of sons in mind, the first two ceremonies can easily be modified to welcome daughters. The third ceremony, "Celebrating Equality," is written in gender-neutral language, so it needs no modification when used for a *brit bat.*

Because nothing engages the heart like beautiful music, we've included original songs to accompany the ceremonies. Working with two accomplished musicians, Reuben Moss and Jason Paige, we created a collection of music, *Songs for Celebrating Brit Shalom.* The songs speak to important elements in the ceremonies. There is sheet music at the back of the book, and studio recordings of the songs are available on iTunes.

It's ideal to have one copy of this book for each person attending the *brit shalom*, since everyone participates. The book also makes a nice memento for your guests to take home. We've included a page at the front where it can be personalized with a photo and details of your service.

More broadly, this book is intended for anyone who wants to learn about the emerging ritual of *brit shalom.* The book can serve as a resource for rabbis and for others as a way of opening up a dialogue about alternatives to Jewish circumcision.

We've worked hard to craft ceremonies that are intellectually and spiritually engaging and that will have wide appeal. At the

same time, this is a personal occasion. Modify the ceremonies as you like or use them as inspiration for creating your own unique service.

Above all, savor this milestone. The days when your child is a newborn pass all too soon. As the words of the *shehecheyanu* remind us, this is the perfect time to reflect on our gratitude for life itself, for those who brought us into life, and for this very moment of holiness and celebration.

Lisa Braver Moss and Rebecca Wald

Celebrating
BRIT SHALOM

Brit Shalom Families: A New Reality

"The Jewish people invented circumcision." "Circumcision is a matter of Jewish identity." "All Jews circumcise." People often make such assumptions. But are the assumptions valid?

Historians debate the origins of circumcision, but we know that it has been practiced since at least the beginning of recorded history, and not exclusively by Jewish people. There is evidence that the ancient Egyptians circumcised. It's even possible that the early Hebrews adopted the practice, by choice or by force, from them.

Although viewed by the very religious as a commandment directly from God, according to Jewish law, circumcision is not what makes a boy or a man Jewish. Moreover, throughout history, there have been instances when circumcision has been neglected and even rejected. For example, in the 1840s, a number of Jewish

leaders in Europe advocated abolishing circumcision in favor of a *bris* that did not include it. While this reform was never adopted, some Jews continued to challenge the necessity of circumcision. Questions have been raised about whether Sigmund Freud circumcised his sons. Noted psychiatrist Wilhelm Reich wrote passionately against the practice. Theodor Herzl, the father of modern political Zionism, left his son intact.

Even within the scope of modern observance, *brit milah* is not universal. From its inception in 1963, Humanistic Judaism has eschewed the rite, citing its theism and gender bias. Instead it favors naming ceremonies for girls and boys alike. Jewish Humanists view circumcision as a matter of parental choice and feel that if done at all, it should be in a hospital setting without any attendant ritual.

Many Jewish Americans circumcise for cultural rather than religious reasons. Jewish children are circumcised in hospitals every day alongside non-Jewish newborns. In countries where circumcision is not the norm, such as Sweden, there's a long history of secular Jews leaving their sons intact.

People are becoming increasingly open to the idea that circumcision may do more harm than good. Some feel this is a choice best made when a man can weigh the pros and cons for himself.

It's no surprise that Jews are among those considering these ideas. We're often at the forefront of social movements. We are also known for being proactive when it comes to the health and well-being of our children.

Young couples today are embracing the idea of natural parenting, including birth without unnecessary intervention, breastfeeding on demand, and close physical and emotional contact between caregiver and infant. Some feel circumcision is incompatible with these values.

For parents who wish to forgo *brit milah, brit shalom* is becoming a popular alternative. Recent years have seen a steady rise in *brit shalom* families, although ceremonies to welcome intact Jewish boys have been taking place in informal ways for several decades. They have gone by various names, including *brit b'li milah* (covenant without circumcision), *brit chayim* (covenant of life), and *brit ben* (covenant for a son). The term *brit shalom* (covenant of peace) was possibly first used to describe a covenantal ceremony without circumcision by Rabbi Natan Segal in the early 1980s.

Dr. Mark Reiss, a founder of the group Doctors Opposing Circumcision, has long maintained a web page listing rabbis and others who openly perform these ceremonies. As of 2015 the list

includes about 140 rabbis—and it continues to grow. There are many more rabbis who offer *brit shalom* if asked.

In recent years synagogues have engaged in considerable outreach to encourage participation and affiliation. Non-traditional families, including interfaith couples, gay and lesbian Jews, and multi-ethnic Jews, are being sought out and embraced. The goal is to celebrate the diversity of Judaism—to acknowledge that families come in different forms and to welcome all of them. It's time for *brit shalom* families to be openly included.

The Jewish world benefits from a vibrant constituency that participates thoughtfully and passionately in Jewish life. Seen in this light, *brit shalom* families are integral to the vitality and continuity of contemporary Judaism.

Preparing for Brit Shalom

The birth of a baby is an exciting time for the whole family. It can also be exhausting for the parents. For this reason, simplicity is key in planning and setting up for a *brit shalom*. Parents should plan ahead where possible and assign *bris*-related tasks to those outside the immediate family. Being flexible about plans and realistic about expectations sets the tone for a relaxed and festive occasion.

The *bris* is traditionally held on a boy's eighth day of life, in the morning, counting his birth day as day one. Parents can follow this custom or set another date.

If a family-led service is planned, parents can simply choose one of the three ceremonies in this book and designate roles. Rabbis can select the service they feel fits best with the family and add opening remarks and commentary. In either case, little or no

modification is needed, but the ceremonies can certainly be embellished or changed.

For example, all three ceremonies feature the cutting of a pomegranate in place of circumcision. Parents or rabbis may prefer to substitute or add another central act. Here are a few ideas: washing the baby's feet, blessing parts of the baby's body, and having honored guests add a flower to a vase or light a candle while stating their hopes for the baby's future.

Some relatives may need a chance to adjust to the idea of *brit shalom*. Parents may find it appropriate to have conversations with family ahead of time, and perhaps share this book, so that there are no surprises.

Roles

Each ceremony has parts for the leader, the parents, and honored guests. Honors and readings should be assigned beforehand, and all participants should know their roles. It may be helpful for the leader to have a master copy with the names of all participants penciled in. This way the leader can keep everyone on track. If there are just a few people attending, roles may be combined.

Roles are assigned however parents like. If a rabbi is not officiating, the leader can be a parent, grandparent, other family member, or close friend. The *sandek*, who holds the baby during the service, is an honor traditionally bestowed upon a most esteemed member of the family, such as the eldest grandparent. The role of godparents, or *kvatters*, is often given to prospective parents as a sign of good fortune. The *kvatters* carry the baby into the room at the start of the ceremony. Other honors include the candlelighter and the *amidah l'b'rachot*, who holds the baby during the blessings and naming.

Because today's families don't necessarily conform with the traditional mother-father model, the word "parent" is used throughout the ceremonies; again, these roles should be assigned in advance. Also, many speaking roles require a little Hebrew. Transliterations are provided; however, individuals with these roles may wish to familiarize themselves in advance. Persons to whom honors are assigned should be seated at or near the front.

A checklist of honors and items needed for the service appears on page 69.

Music

Songs for Celebrating Brit Shalom, written to accompany the services, can be used in different ways depending on the family's preference and the musical resources at hand. There are a total of eight recorded tracks: four complete with vocals and four instrumental only. Of course if you have special music of your own in mind, feel free to use it instead or in addition.

The simplest option for using *Songs for Celebrating Brit Shalom* is to play the vocal tracks where designated in the service. They are available on iTunes. Someone will need to be responsible for cuing the songs throughout. Ideally this responsibility should be given to a person without a large role in the service.

If there is a singer in the family, he or she can sing along to the instrumental versions, also on iTunes. Some families may wish to bring in a cantor, guitarist, or other professional. Sheet music, starting on page 71, will serve as a guide. The musical participation of everyone who feels so moved will sweeten the ceremony, and those attending can be encouraged to sing along.

Naming

It's traditional for a baby to be given a Hebrew name toward the end of the *bris*. Hebrew names are used whenever a person is called to the *bimah* during rituals such as *bar* and *bat mitzvah* and during weddings. In fact, parents' own Hebrew names are used during the *bris*. Those who don't already have them may wish to choose them for this occasion.

In the Ashkenazi tradition, the baby's name is often chosen in memory of a relative or is the Hebrew version of the child's given name. In the Sephardic tradition, the child is named in honor of a living relative. When the name is presented, parents may wish to speak about its significance. This is also a good time for parents to add other personal remarks or readings.

Setup

Preparation for *brit shalom* should be simple, and formal invitations are customarily not sent. Instead parents and family can spread the word via phone call, text message, or email.

The service can be held anywhere—at a home, a synagogue, or a community center. Parents can even reserve a room in a

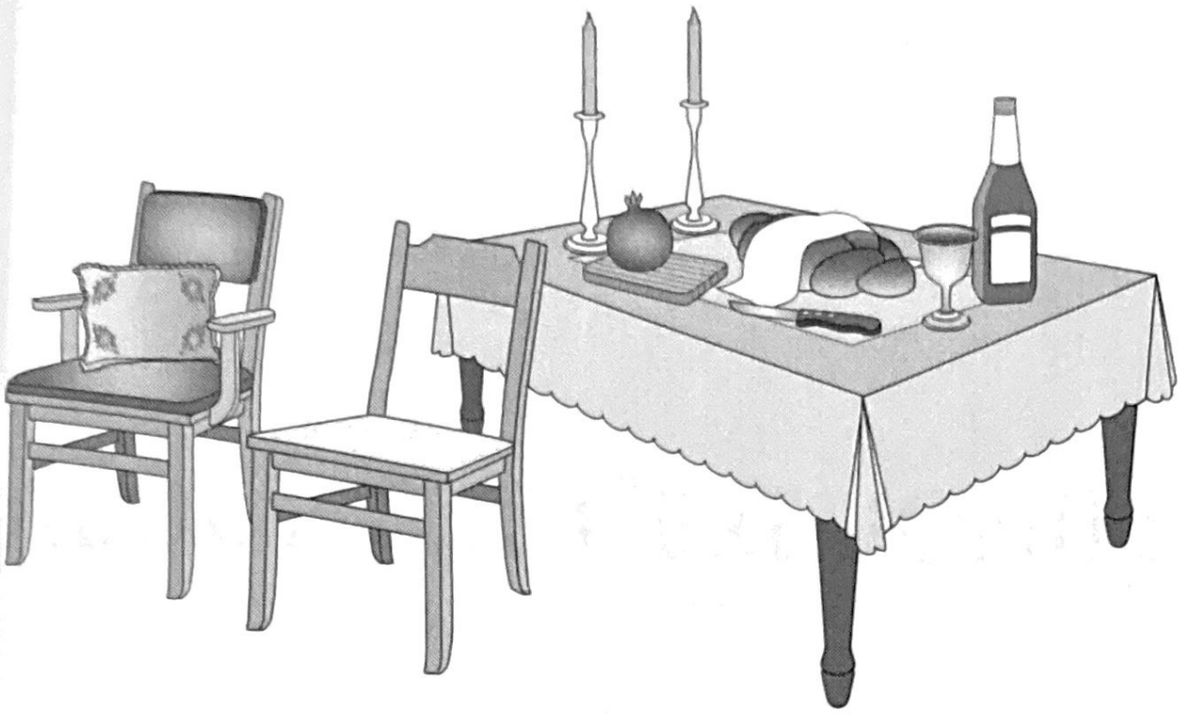
restaurant, with lunch after. Sufficient seating for guests is ideal. However, the ceremonies in *Celebrating Brit Shalom* are short enough that guests in good health should be able to remain standing.

A festive table should be prepared with two candles, matches, a bottle of kosher wine, a *kiddush* cup for the rabbi or leader and cups for the parents, and a *challah* for blessings and the meal afterwards. The *challah* should be covered with a ceremonial cloth or a napkin.

A pomegranate should be placed on a cutting board, with a sharp knife alongside. If a pomegranate is not available, a seasonal fruit or vegetable makes a good substitute.

Two chairs are placed close to the table. One should be simple, without ornamentation, where the *sandek* will sit with the baby during the service. The other chair should be more elegant in appearance and is known as the chair of Elijah—the *kisei shel Eliyahu*. This chair remains unoccupied during the service. A chair from the family's dining room—perhaps with a decorative pillow added—can serve this purpose.

The baby may be wrapped in a special *tallit* during the service. An ornamental cushion, on which the *kvatters* carry the baby into the room, may also be used.



Afterwards

Traditionally a meal is served to guests following the ceremony. Parents may cook, bring in food, or ask guests to bring dishes to share. Wine generally accompanies the meal. Regarding the cut pomegranate: some families may wish to bury it; others may choose to set the fruit aside and germinate the seeds for subsequent planting, creating a living memento of the event.

It's customary to say a blessing over the wine and *challah* before the meal. Because these blessings are incorporated into the end of each ceremony, they don't need to be said again.

Families may wish to use *Songs for Celebrating Brit Shalom* as background music during the meal.

About the Ceremonies

About the Ceremonies

Each ceremony in *Celebrating Brit Shalom* explores a different theme and incorporates the rich traditions of *brit milah* while introducing a novel act: the cutting of a pomegranate.

The pomegranate has long been a powerful Jewish symbol. It is said that when the Israelites reached the promised land, the scouts brought Moses pomegranates to demonstrate the land's fertility. Today it's traditional to serve pomegranates on Rosh Hashana because the fruit's many seeds represent abundance. Since the covenant reenacted during the *bris* speaks directly to the ongoing fertility of the Jewish people and their land, there is perhaps no better symbol.

The pomegranate is also associated with wisdom. Legend has it that its seeds number 613, corresponding to the 613 *mitzvot*, or Torah commandments. In the Book of Exodus, the Hebrew

high priest's robe is said to be embroidered with pomegranates. The pillars in front of King Solomon's temple are described in the Book of Kings as being engraved with images of the fruit, and the inspiration for Solomon's crown may have been the pomegranate's top, or calyx.

Why include cutting of any kind on this joyous occasion? This act reminds us that embracing one's Jewishness throughout life is a serious commitment. It also acknowledges the role that circumcision has played in Jewish history. Instead of simply skipping circumcision, in cutting the pomegranate we recognize the past while moving toward a new and better future.

Peace and Wholeness

The language of "Peace and Wholeness" corresponds most closely with standard *brit milah* liturgy and is therefore an excellent choice for those families who want a more traditional service. Thematically, the ceremony explores the intriguing relationship between *shalom* שָׁלוֹם (peace/God) and *shaleim* שָׁלֵם (wholeness).

The Hebrew words *shalom* and *shaleim* share the same root. The connection between these words is explored in the biblical story of *brit shalom*, which appears in Numbers 25. It is here that God

gives the *brit shalom* (covenant of peace) to the priest Pinchas. Some Jewish scholars suggest that Pinchas is given this covenant because he needs to be personally transformed from one who commits violence in God's name into one who promotes peace and wholeness in God's name.

Tradition holds that every letter of a Torah scroll must be written with perfect clarity. There is one exception, however, and this occurs in the story of *brit shalom*. Here rabbinic sages, who codified the written Torah, instructed the scribes to deliberately make a break in the letter *vav* within the word *shalom*. This was done so that the word can be read as *shalom* (peace) or *shaleim* (wholeness). The broken *vav* reminds us of the profound connection between the two.

In the story of *brit shalom*, in the calligraphy of the Torah itself with its deliberately broken *vav*, and in the "Peace and Wholeness" service, we are made aware that the full presence of God can never be experienced through acts of violence.

Faith and Trust

In the "Faith and Trust" ceremony the overarching theme is the importance of trust in our lives, between and among all of us. The meaning of faith in Judaism is also explored.

In Genesis 15 we first learn of a special promise made by God to the Jewish people. Abram, later Abraham, puts his trust in God and, in exchange, the Jewish people are given a future. Similarly, the newborn comes into the world knowing nothing but trust. The call to parents and to the community is to protect that sacred confidence. This begins with a peaceful welcome into the covenant, which preserves the child's trust in the world around him.

This ceremony also addresses a paradox: the idea that while God asks us to do certain things, we have the freedom to do what is asked—or not. The co-existence of obligation and choice is illustrated by the double meaning of the word *mitzvah*, which means both "commandment" and "good deed." *Mitzvah* conveys both faith in God (doing what is commanded) and our own human agency (doing what our conscience tells us is right). Free will implies not only that we are permitted to question, but that questioning is part and parcel of faith.

We find meaning in our Jewishness by wrestling with tradition, making it our own. Similarly, children who trust their parents and the world around them grow into confident adults who can think for themselves.

Celebrating Equality

The "Celebrating Equality" ceremony explores and embodies the concept of fairness. Because it is written in gender-neutral language, it can be used as is to welcome boys, girls, and intersex babies into the covenant. It can also be used without adaptation by same-sex parents and single-parent families.

In keeping with the theme of equality, this ceremony acknowledges feminine associations with God in Jewish tradition and references the prophet Miriam alongside the prophet Elijah.

Among the facets of equality that are explored in this ceremony is the Torah's imperative to love the stranger. We are commanded to practice compassion toward those whom we don't know, rather than reserving our empathy for those who are known to us. In this ceremony, we are acknowledging that though a newcomer, the child has a personhood that is sacred.

About the Music

About the Music

Songs for Celebrating Brit Shalom is an album of music that has been created to accompany all three ceremonies, highlighting key moments in the service. The first song, "Lech L'cha," is played as a processional as the ceremony begins, setting the tone and giving everyone a few moments to gather. "Shalom, Shaleim" comes next, featuring a sentiment that is shared by many *brit shalom* families, the connection between notions of peace and wholeness. "Miriam and Elijah" is played prior to the cutting of the pomegranate, in recognition of these two important prophets' roles as protectors of children. "Rimonim, Rimonim (The Pomegranate Song)," with its upbeat cataloging of the pomegranate's significance in Jewish tradition, comes in toward the end of the service.

While the music was written for use with the ceremonies, each song stands on its own and can be enjoyed in settings beyond the *brit shalom*.

Lech L'cha

The lyrics of "Lech L'cha" are drawn from passages in Genesis in which God commands Abraham to depart from the land he has known and to venture forth into unknown territory—an action that will ultimately inaugurate the history of the Jewish people.

The Hebrew words *lech l'cha* are usually translated as "go forth" (from your birthplace). However, the literal translation is "go to yourself." What is to be made of this peculiar grammatical construction? Medieval French rabbi Rashi interprets it to mean "go for your own benefit," indicating that the journey God is calling upon Abraham to make isn't just physical, but is for his spiritual benefit. This notion of going to, or for, one's self—of looking inward to discover one's outward path—is universal.

Shalom, Shaleim

The song "Shalom, Shaleim" highlights the linguistic connection among words of peace and healing. In Hebrew, the word *shalom* (God, peace) and the word *shaleim* (wholeness) share the same root. In English, the word "holy" is related to the words "whole," "health," and "heal."

The lyrics of "Shalom, Shaleim" also reference an often-quoted line from the Book of Zechariah: "not by might, nor by power, but by [God's] spirit." This captures the idea that we are called upon to bring our spiritual intent to our Jewish practice and to do so peacefully.

Miriam and Elijah

At a ritual circumcision, the prophet Elijah is an important figure, as he is said to watch over the baby to ensure his survival and healing. The baby is circumcised on the ceremonial chair of Elijah and "Eliyahu Hanavi" is often sung. "Miriam and Elijah" evokes Elijah as guardian of children and also as someone who spoke against false prophets and stood up to kings.

The song also celebrates the prophet Miriam. Although widely known for leading the women in song and dance after the Israelites have escaped Egypt, Miriam is rarely acknowledged as a mother-child advocate whose ingenuity shapes the course of Jewish history.

In a pivotal biblical story, Pharaoh has issued an edict that all Hebrew baby boys be killed, so Moses's mother sets him adrift in the Nile that he might have a chance of escaping certain death. His sister—Miriam—stations herself nearby. When

Pharaoh's daughter spies the child and decides to keep him as her own, Miriam thinks quickly and volunteers to find a Hebrew nursemaid for the infant. Through this brave intervention Miriam is able to reunite Moses with his mother, who then feeds and nurtures him—literally and, as he grows up, with Israelite traditions and identity.

Rimonim, Rimonim (The Pomegranate Song)

The pomegranate is one of the oldest known fruits, widely referenced in the Torah and representing fertility and wisdom. Indeed, it has been asserted that the Tree of Knowledge represented in the biblical Garden of Eden was a pomegranate tree—which would have been native to the region. "Rimonim, Rimonim (The Pomegranate Song)" joyfully enumerates many of the symbolic meanings of the fruit in Jewish tradition.

Peace and Wholeness Ceremony

Peace and Wholeness Ceremony

The ceremony begins with the song "Lech L'cha" playing (page 73). The leader, parents, and candlelighter are stationed at the front of the room; the table, the chair of Elijah, and the chair for the *sandek* and baby are set up as explained on page 9. As the music plays, the *kvatters* (who have been waiting in another room with the baby) slowly carry him into the room on a pillow, joining the others at the front. When the song concludes, the leader begins.

LEADER:

Will everyone please rise and join me in saying—

EVERYONE:

Baruch ha-ba! May the one who enters be blessed!

(The *kvatters* hand the baby to the *sandek*, who then sits with him on the non-ornamental chair. The leader asks the

congregation to be seated. Parents and candlelighter remain standing.)

LEADER:

We are here today for a sacred purpose: to welcome this newborn into our community and into the covenant between God and the Jewish people. In gathering here we are taking part in a tradition observed by Jews for thousands of years.

A new Jewish soul has been given to us. We are infinitely grateful for this miraculous gift of life, of *chayim*. May we all fulfill the commandment of God: walk before me, and be whole-hearted.

In a moment, we will light the candles, an ancient tradition observed during the *bris*. Long ago, in times of oppression, lit candles placed in a window served as a clandestine signal to Jewish neighbors that a *bris* was taking place. Today these candles represent the warm light of peace. We kindle them in honor of [*child's name*]. Also at this time, we recite the *shehecheyanu*, acknowledging our gratitude for having been brought to this special moment.

CANDLELIGHTER:

(Lights two candles and says or sings:)

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁהֶחֱיָנוּ וְקִיְּמָנוּ
וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לַזְּמַן הַזֶּה.

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha-olam, shehecheyanu v'kiy'manu v'higianu laz'man hazeh.

Blessed is Adonai our God, sovereign of the universe, who has given us life, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this season.

May there be peace in our ranks and tranquility in Israel. May this child's future be blessed, may his lifespan be long, may his table be bountiful. May he grow in wisdom and goodness to old age, and may his life be infused with every joy.

(The candlelighter is seated.)

PARENTS:

Today as we present our son for *brit shalom*, we contemplate the many meanings of the word *shalom*. According to Jewish tradition, the word *shalom* is regarded as one of the names of God. It also means "peace" and comes from the same root as the word *shaleim*, meaning "wholeness" or "completeness." When we feel God's presence, we feel whole, complete, harmonious—in unity with all of creation.

PARENTS:

There is a tradition among Jewish scribes that each letter of a Torah scroll must be made without flaw, for perfect readability. However, there is a single instance in the Torah that presents an exception. It occurs in the story of *brit shalom*, in which God gives the covenant of peace to the priest Pinchas after he commits a violent act in God's name. In this section, the scribes intentionally break the letter *vav* within the word *shalom*, making it readable as either *shalom* or *shaleim*. Why is there this one case of deliberate ambiguity?

LEADER:

The broken *vav* in the story of *brit shalom* is there to remind us of the profound relationship between peace, *shalom*, and wholeness, *shaleim*. In the absence of one, the other cannot fully exist.

(The song "Shalom, Shaleim" is played, page 77.)

PARENTS:

We joyfully present our son for *brit shalom*, marking entry into the covenant between God and the Jewish people.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ
בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל קִדּוּשׁ הַחַיִּים.

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha-olam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu al kiddush ha-chayim.

We praise you, *m'kor ha-chayim*, source of life, who commands us to sanctify life.

LEADER:
(Motions to the chair of Elijah and says:)

Zeh ha-kisei shel Eliyahu Hanavi.

This is the chair of Elijah the prophet. May he be remembered for good, and may he bless this child.

According to Jewish tradition, Elijah was the only prophet who never died, riding to heaven in a chariot and returning to us on earth to accompany us as we carry out various Jewish practices. Known as the angel of the covenant, Elijah is said to attend each and every *bris*. He is also recognized as the protector of the child throughout life.

Some say Elijah returned to life as Pinchas—that the same soul descended to the world twice. Elijah and Pinchas were on similar paths, both being zealous for God's honor. The connection between these two figures is especially meaningful to us here today, as Pinchas is the very priest who received the *brit shalom*, or covenant of peace.

(The song "Miriam and Elijah" is played, page 81. When the music ends, the *sandek* rises with the baby and approaches the table.)

PARENTS:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁאִפְשֵׁר לָנוּ לִבְחוֹר בְּרִית שָׁלוֹם.

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha-olam, she-ifsheir lanu livchor brit shalom.

Blessed are you, Adonai our God, sovereign of the universe, who has enabled us to choose the covenant of peace.

LEADER:

I now ask the parents to come forward and cut the pomegranate.

PARENTS:

(Cut the pomegranate and say:)

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַכְנִיסוֹ בִּבְרִיתוֹ.

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha-olam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu, l'hachniso bivrito.

Blessed is Adonai our God, ruler of the universe, by whose *mitzvot* we are made holy, who commands us to bring our son into the covenant.

EVERYONE:

As we have witnessed this child's entry into the covenant, may we also witness his entry into Jewish learning, the *chuppah*, and the practice of good deeds.

(The song "Rimonim, Rimonim [The Pomegranate Song]" is played, page 85.)

LEADER:

As Abraham received his name in conjunction with the covenant, this child is receiving his Hebrew name today. I now ask the *amidah l'b'rachot* to please come forward and hold him for the naming.

(Once the baby is being held by the *amidah l'b'rachot*, the leader continues.)

We pray together that God will sustain this child. Let him be known in the house of Israel as [*baby's Hebrew name*], son of [*Hebrew names of parents*]. May he be a source of delight to his parents now and throughout their lives.

Today this child has entered into the ancient covenant between God and the Jewish people. May he grow up to affirm the three central tenets of Judaism: God, Torah, and Israel. That is, may he engage in conversation with God. May he value and pursue Jewish learning and bring to it his own spiritual vitality. May he grow up to create a Jewish home and affiliate with the Jewish community and the Land of Israel as he strives to engage in goodness as a way of life.

May God who blessed our ancestors also bless and protect this child. May he be a blessing to his parents, to the Jewish people, and to humanity.

PARENTS:

(If desired, the parents can explain the significance of the name they've chosen and share personal remarks or readings.)

We give thanks to God for the gift of our child. We pray that he may be protected and that he will continue to be a source of joy for us and for our community. God, be present in our lives. Guide us in loving our child and in imparting wisdom to him, so that he may one day find deep meaning in Judaism and live a life of peace.

LEADER:

(Lifts cup of wine as everyone sings or says:)

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגָּפֶן.

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha-olam, borei p'ri hagafen.

Blessed are you, Adonai our God, ruler of the universe, creator of the fruit of the vine.

(Leader and parents drink wine.)

God, we pray that you may accept this *brit shalom* ceremony as a symbolic performance of all 613 commandments.

יְבָרֶכְךָ יְיָ וְיִשְׁמְרֶךָ.

Y'varech'cha Adonai v'yishm'recha.

May God bless you and keep you.

יָאֵר יְיָ פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וִיחֻנֶּךָּ.

Ya-eir Adonai panav eilecha vichuneka.

May God's light shine upon you, and may God be gracious to you.

יִשָּׂא יְיָ פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וְיָשֵׂם לְךָ שָׁלוֹם.

Yisa Adonai panav eilecha v'yaseim l'cha shalom.

May you feel God's presence within you always, and may you find peace.

(Leads everyone in "Siman Tov u'Mazal Tov," if desired, as the *amidah l'b'rachot* returns the baby to his parents. The leader then holds the *challah* and continues:)

As we prepare now for the festive meal we say together—

EVERYONE:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, הַמּוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן־הָאָרֶץ.

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha-olam, hamotzi lechem min ha-aretz. Amen.

L'chayim!

Faith and Trust Ceremony

Faith and Trust Ceremony

The ceremony begins with the song "Lech L'cha" playing (page 73). The leader, parents, and candlelighter are stationed at the front of the room; the table, the chair of Elijah, and the chair for the *sandek* and baby are set up as explained on page 9. As the music plays, the *kvatters* (who have been waiting in another room with the baby) slowly carry him into the room on a pillow, joining the others at the front. When the song concludes, the leader begins.

LEADER:

Will everyone please rise and join me in saying—

EVERYONE:

Baruch ha-ba! May he who comes be blessed!

(The *kvatters* hand the baby to the *sandek*, who then sits with the baby on the non-ornamental chair. The leader asks the

congregation to be seated. Parents and candlelighter remain standing.)

LEADER:

Today we rejoice in one of life's most significant moments—the arrival of a new life into this world, into this esteemed family, and into the rich culture and traditions of Judaism.

For thousands of years, on the eighth day following the birth of a boy, Jewish families and their communities have gathered as we do today, in humble gratitude for the gift of life. Today we affirm, for ourselves and our children, a life of connection with God, with our heritage, and with our people.

The lighting of candles during the *bris* dates to ancient times. As it is written, the life breath of humanity is the lamp of God. The breath that gives us life illuminates the depths of the human soul. The candles we light are for [*child's name*]. They represent a spark of life; a new Jewish soul has come into being.

CANDLELIGHTER:

(Lights two candles and says or sings:)

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁהֶחֱיָנוּ וְקִיְּמָנוּ
וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לַזְּמַן הַזֶּה.

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha-olam, shehecheyanu v'kiy'manu v'higianu laz'man.

Blessed is Adonai our God, sovereign of the universe, who has given us life, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this season.

May this child develop and grow like a flourishing garden. May his trust in his parents and community remain unbroken. As he is protected in childhood by those who cherish him, may he be known in adulthood as one who protects others—a defender of the weak and a champion of righteousness. May he live to old age as a model of wisdom and trustworthiness.

(The candlelighter is seated.)

LEADER:

The story of God, Abraham, and the Jewish people is central to this moment. It can be viewed as a story about trust between God and Abraham. At the age of 99, the childless Abram (later called Abraham) asks: "Oh God, what can you give me, seeing that I shall die childless?" The word of God comes to him in reply: "Look to the heaven and the stars, if you are able to count them. So shall your offspring be."

Abraham puts his faith in God, and God follows through on the promise to secure the continuation of the Jewish people. In this

story Abraham inherits this world, and the future world, as a reward for his faith.

But what *is* faith? Faith does not mean blind belief despite the evidence. Faith is not passive acquiescence, the absence of doubt, or the avoidance of difficult questions. Faith means profound trust that there is something bigger than ourselves.

READER 1:

(Rises and says:)

A newborn baby, cradled in the arms of an adult, can only trust—trust that his eyes will meet a loving smile, trust that he will be comforted, trust that his needs will be met. The newborn infant with nothing but trust in his heart is as Abraham was in the presence of God.

READER 2:

(Rises and says:)

Today, as we recognize the sacred trust that God and Abraham placed in each other, we also honor the profound trust this infant has placed in all of us. We promise that he need not fear for his future, for we will do everything in our power to protect him, so that he too may provide a secure future for his children and grandchildren.

(The song "Shalom, Shaleim" is played, page 77.)

PARENT:

Today we pray that God grants us the humility to grow spiritually as our child grows and to make us worthy models for him. We pray that our love for our son, already so profound on this joyous occasion, may become even deeper over time. And we pray that through this covenant of peace our bond with the Jewish people will become ever more meaningful in our lives and in the life of our son.

EVERYONE:

May God grant strength to those who love and cherish this child, so that they may always do their best to guide and nurture him.

PARENT:

(Looking towards baby:)

Today, you startle at what you see and hear around you. May you remain forever astonished by the miracles that life offers.

Today, you cry for food and comfort. May you one day cry out to correct the injustices of the world.

Today, your tiny hand searches for ours. May you grow to reach out for connection with the Jewish people.

PARENTS:

Joyfully do we present our son for this ceremony of *brit shalom*—entry into the covenant between God and the Jewish people.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ
בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל קִדּוּשׁ הַחַיִּים.

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha-olam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu al kiddush ha-chayim.

We praise you, *m'kor ha-chayim*, source of life, who commands us to sanctify life.

LEADER:

(Motioning to the chair of Elijah:)

Zeh ha-kisei shel Eliyahu Hanavi.

This is the chair of Elijah the prophet. May he be remembered for good, and may he bless this child, protecting him now and throughout his days.

(The song "Miriam and Elijah" is played, page 81. As the music concludes, the *sandek* brings the baby toward the table.)

LEADER:

Jewish faith presents a paradox: we are commanded to do various deeds, and yet God also grants us the freedom to *choose* to do what is commanded—and how to do it.

In being true to our spiritual intent, we serve as a full human partner in the covenant with God.

READER 1:

(Rises and says:)

Jewish tradition tells us that we are all created *b'tzelem Elohim*—with God as a model. We are given the gift of reason and human agency. Thus, we have what Rabbi Morton L. Gordon has called "the capacity to bridge the gulf between 'what is' and 'what can be.' The evil we have made, we can unmake, for we are fashioned in the image of God."

LEADER:

Today the act of circumcision is replaced with the cutting of a pomegranate. This fruit is an ancient Jewish symbol representing knowledge and abundance. I now ask the parents to please come forward.

PARENTS:

(Approach the table and say:)

Blessed is Adonai our God, sovereign of the universe, who has given us the ability to bring our own understanding to ancient traditions.

(Cut the pomegranate and say:)

Blessed is Adonai our God, sovereign of the universe, by whose *mitzvot* we are made holy, who commands us to act with a consistent heart and a spirit that is true to God as we bring the new generation into the covenant.

LEADER:

As he is entered into the covenant, so may he enter into Torah study with a lifelong commitment to the Jewish people; so may he enter the marriage *chuppah,* establishing a Jewish home in which to rear children; and so may he enter into a life of *ma-asim tovim*—good deeds.

EVERYONE:

May this world be a better place for his presence!

(The song "Rimonim, Rimonim [The Pomegranate Song]" is played, page 85.)

LEADER:

As we prepare to give this child his Hebrew name, I now ask the *amidah l'b'rachot* to come forward and take the baby.

(Once the amidah l'b'rachot is holding the baby, the leader continues:)

May this child thrive under the care of his parents. Let his name be known in the house of Israel as [*baby's Hebrew name*], son of [*Hebrew names of parents*]. May his name be a source of joy to all who know him. May his parents delight in his physical and spiritual growth. As they have brought him into the covenant, so may they show by example the pleasure of Jewish learning. And let us all say, Amen.

(If desired, the parents can explain the significance of the name they've chosen and share personal remarks or readings.)

LEADER:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגָּפֶן.

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha-olam, borei p'ri hagafen.

Blessed are you, Adonai our God, sovereign of the universe, creator of the fruit of the vine.

(Leader and parents drink wine.)

God, we pray that you may accept this *brit shalom* ceremony as a symbolic performance not just of *brit milah*, but of all the 613 commandments.

(Leader addresses the congregation:)

יְבָרֶכְךָ יְיָ וְיִשְׁמְרֶךָ.

Y'varech'cha Adonai v'yishm'recha.

May God bless you and keep you.

יָאֵר יְיָ פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וִיחֻנֶּךָּ.

Ya-eir Adonai panav eilecha vichuneka.

May God's light shine upon you, and may God be gracious to you.

יִשָּׂא יְיָ פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וְיָשֵׂם לְךָ שָׁלוֹם.

Yisa Adonai panav eilecha v'yaseim l'cha shalom.

May you feel God's presence within you always, and may you find peace.

(Leads everyone in "Siman Tov u'Mazal Tov," if desired, as the *amidah l'b'rachot* returns the baby to his parents. The leader then holds the *challah* and continues.)

As we prepare now for the festive meal we say together:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, הַמּוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן-
הָאָרֶץ.

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha-olam, hamotzi lechem min ha-aretz. Amen.

Blessed is Adonai our God, ruler of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth.

EVERYONE:

L'chayim!

Celebrating Equality Ceremony

Celebrating Equality Ceremony

The ceremony begins with the song "Lech L'cha" playing (page 73). The leader, parents, and candlelighter are stationed at the front of the room; the table, the chair of Elijah, and the chair for the *sandek* and baby are set up as explained on page 9. As the music plays, the *kvatters* (who have been waiting in another room with the baby) slowly carry the baby into the room on a pillow, joining the others at the front. When the song concludes, the leader begins.

LEADER:

Will everyone please rise and join me in saying—

EVERYONE:

Baruch ha-ba! May the one who comes be blessed!

(The *kvatters* hand the baby to the *sandek*, who then sits with the baby on the non-ornamental chair. The leader asks the

congregation to be seated. Parents and candlelighter remain standing.)

LEADER:

From the vast sea of living energy from which we are all born, and into which we all inevitably one day return, a new life has come into being. We delight in this newly arrived child and are awed by the great wonder and mystery of life itself.

CANDLELIGHTER:

Lighting candles at the *bris* is an ancient tradition. We kindle them to remind us of the days when Jewish families were forced to hold such ceremonies in secret because of religious persecution. Lit candles, placed in the windows of the home where the *bris* was taking place, were a covert signal to the community to come inside for the service. Today, we will be lighting candles to symbolize the courage and dedication of Jews throughout the ages to practice their beliefs despite adversity.

(Candlelighter doesn't light candles yet.)

LEADER:

The *shehecheyanu* is a 2000-year-old Jewish blessing to offer thanks for new and seasonal experiences. It is often recited at the beginning of holidays and on special occasions. During ritual circumcision, the *shehecheyanu* is not recited because of the pain experienced by the newborn. Today, in observing *brit shalom*, we

can say this blessing because we delight in having arrived at this wonderful day. As the candlelighter lights the candles, let us all recite the *shehecheyanu* together in Hebrew and then in English.

(Candlelighter lights the candles.)

EVERYONE:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁהֶחֱיָנוּ וְקִיְּמָנוּ
וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לַזְּמַן הַזֶּה.

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha-olam, shehecheyanu v'kiy'manu v'higianu laz'man.

Blessed are You, Adonai Eloheinu, creator of time and space, who has supported us, protected us, and brought us to this moment.

(Candlelighter sits.)

LEADER:

As we look upon this tiny baby, inherently precious and unique, we are reminded of the Jewish principle of *adam yachid*. In Hebrew this means "a single human being." According to Jewish teaching, humankind began with a single person, without gender or race. Thus each of us is equally valuable.

Equality does not mean we all have equal life circumstances. Equality means that no person or family is inherently better than

another. We all have the same right to be free and to be treated with respect.

READER 1:

(Rises and says:)

Just as God's original human creation was without gender, Jewish tradition understands God as neither male nor female. God is viewed as one, all-powerful, the creator and master of the universe. The *shechinah* (she-khee-na), or divine feminine presence of God, is said to permeate all creation. It has been called the inner glory of existence—the force within us that seeks peace, heals what is broken, and embraces change.

According to the Talmud, the *shechinah* is also the divine that dwells within the ordinary. The creation of new life is a perfect example. While birth is a commonplace event, it is also miraculous.

GRANDPARENT:

(Rises and says:)

There is a Jewish teaching that while a baby develops in the womb, an angel teaches the baby the entire Torah. Just before birth this angel touches the baby on the mouth, causing the child to lose the conscious awareness of what has been learned. This beautiful story expresses the idea that children come into the world already knowing, at a very deep level, what is important. As

parents, our role is to guide our children and help them discover their own truth.

PARENT:
(To the baby:)

Extraordinary—that is how I look upon your entry into this family and this community. From where have you come? What is your destiny? My desire to know the unknowable about you and my awareness that I am helpless in the face of these questions humble me. I must wait and see who you are. You are at once familiar, but also a welcome newcomer.

LEADER:
The commandment to love the stranger occurs 36 times in the Torah, demonstrating its paramount importance in the eyes of Jewish law. How is this meaningful to us today? The infant is the newest member of this family, but also someone we don't yet know. By treating this newcomer with empathy, we are setting the tone for a lifetime of compassion and respect for others. Thus, we are observing a foundational principle of Judaism.

(The song "Shalom, Shaleim" is played, page 77.)

PARENTS:
Joyfully we present this child for *brit shalom*!

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ
בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל קִדּוּשׁ הַחַיִּים.

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha-olam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu al kiddush ha-chayim.

We praise *m'kor ha-chayim*, the source of life, who inspires us to be mindful in all that we do.

LEADER:

Today we acknowledge the great prophets Miriam and Elijah, who are here both recognized as protectors of children.

(Motioning to the chair of Elijah and Miriam:)

Zeh ha-kisei shel Eliyahu Hanavi v'Miriam Haneviah.

Here is the chair of the prophets Elijah and Miriam.

Revered as the guardian angel of children, Elijah is said to be in attendance at every *bris*. Elijah is also remembered for standing up against enormous opposition—for being a bold voice against the false prophets of his time.

Today we also recognize the prophet Miriam. Best known for leading the women in song and dance following the successful crossing of the Sea of Reeds, Miriam also helped save the life

of Moses when he was a baby. Miriam then showed remarkable bravery and resourcefulness by finding a way to reunite the infant with his mother.

PARENT:
(To the baby:)

We think of Miriam the prophet as we imagine you experiencing the joys of self-expression, of singing, of dancing, of simply being. May Miriam also serve as a model of family loyalty, and may she inspire you to protect the vulnerable.

PARENT:
(To the baby:)

We think of Elijah the prophet as we hope that you will be bold and stand up for what you think is right. We think of Elijah as we hope that you will be protected as you face life's challenges and that you will always be nourished by your Jewish heritage.

(The song "Miriam and Elijah" is played, page 81.)

READER 1:
In the words of Rabbi Lewis Browne: "May we, like our ancestors, stand out against the multitude, protesting with all our might against its follies and its fears. May a divine discontent give color to our dreams, and a passion for holy heresy set the tone of our

thoughts. May the soul of the rebel throb in us as it throbbed in our ancestors, that today and forever we may be a light unto those who stumble in the darkness."

READER 2:

"They arrived at the place that God had told him. Abraham built an altar there, he laid out the wood, he bound his son Isaac and he laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then Abraham picked up the knife to slay his son.

"At that moment, an angel of God called to him from heaven and said: 'Abraham! Abraham!' And Abraham answered, 'Here I am.' And the angel said to him, 'Do not raise your hand against the boy, or do anything to him.'"

(From Genesis 22)

LEADER:

The pomegranate has been a powerful Jewish symbol throughout our history, representing wisdom and abundance. Today as we welcome this child into Jewish life, we will be cutting a pomegranate to symbolize the child's entry into the covenant.

PARENTS:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁאִפְשֵׁר לָנוּ לִבְחוֹר בְּרִית שָׁלוֹם.

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha-olam, she-ifsheir lanu livchor brit shalom.

Blessed is Adonai our God, sovereign of the universe, who has enabled us to choose the covenant of peace.

(Parents cut the pomegranate and say:)

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ
בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַכְנִיסָם לַבְּרִית.

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha-olam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu, l'hachnisam la-brit.

Blessed is Adonai our God, sovereign of the universe, by whose *mitzvot* we are made holy, who commands us to bring our children into the covenant.

This child is hereby brought into a life of Jewish tradition, culture, and community.

LEADER:

May you go forth to study the Torah and the wisdom of Jewish thinkers throughout the ages.

EVERYONE:

May you find happiness in love, and may you serve humanity through acts of kindness and good deeds! (The song "Rimonim, Rimonim [The Pomegranate Song]" is played, page 85.)

LEADER:

I now ask the *amidah l'b'rachot* to please come forward and hold the baby for the naming.

(Once the baby is being held, the leader continues:)

Today as we welcome you, [*baby's first name*], into Jewish life, we hope that you will always listen to the truth within yourself and so fulfill the vast potential for righteousness and good deeds that exists in every human being. Let your name be called [*baby's Hebrew name*] child of [*Hebrew names of parents*]. May you bring your spiritual vitality to ancient traditions.

PARENTS:

(If desired, parents can explain the significance of the name chosen and share personal remarks or readings.)

May you be protected from harms great and small. May your peaceful entry into the covenant be a model for harmonious interactions throughout your life.

LEADER:
(Lifts cup of wine.)

Let us all say together—

EVERYONE:
בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגָּפֶן.

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha-olam, borei p'ri hagafen.

Blessed are you, Adonai our God, sovereign of the universe,
creator of the fruit of the vine.

(Leader and parents drink wine.)

LEADER:
May this *brit shalom* ceremony serve as a symbolic performance of all 613 commandments.

(To the congregation:)

יְבָרֶכְךָ יְיָ וְיִשְׁמְרֶךָ.

Y'varech'cha Adonai v'yishm'recha.

May God bless you and keep you.

יָאֵר יְיָ פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וִיחֻנֶּךָּ.

Ya-eir Adonai panav eilecha vichuneka.

May God's light shine upon you, and may God be gracious to you.

יִשָּׂא יְיָ פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וְיָשֵׂם לְךָ שָׁלוֹם.

Yisa Adonai panav eilecha v'yaseim l'cha shalom.

May you feel God's presence within you always, and may you find peace.

(Leads everyone in "Siman Tov u'Mazal Tov," if desired, as the *amidah l'b'rachot* returns the baby to the parents. The leader then holds the *challah* and continues:)

As we prepare now for the festive meal we say together—

EVERYONE:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, הַמּוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן־הָאָרֶץ.

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha-olam, hamotzi lechem min ha-aretz. Amen.

Blessed is Adonai our God, sovereign of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth.

L'chayim!

Brit Shalom Checklist

Honors

- Leader
- *Sandek* (honored elder)
- *Kvatters* (godparents; carry the baby into the room)
- *Amidah l'b'rachot* (holds the baby during Hebrew naming)
- Candlelighter
- Readers
- Music cuer (not an official honor, but helpful if *Songs for Celebrating Brit Shalom* or other music is being used)

For the Service

- Ornamental chair
- Plain chair
- Pillow (on which the baby is carried)
- *Tallit* (suggested, to wrap baby)

- Chairs for the guests
- Table and tablecloth
- Two candlesticks, two candles, and matches
- Wine
- *Kiddush* cup
- *Challah*
- Pomegranate (seasonal fruit or vegetable can be substituted)
- Cutting board and knife
- Music-playing device (if needed)

Songs for Celebrating Brit Shalom

Lech L'cha

God said to Abram,
Go forth from your native land
And from your father's house
To the land that I will show you.

I will make of you a great nation,
And I will, I will bless you;
I will make your name great,
And you shall be a blessing.

Chorus:
Go! Go to yourself! Go for your own benefit!
Lech L'cha. (2x)

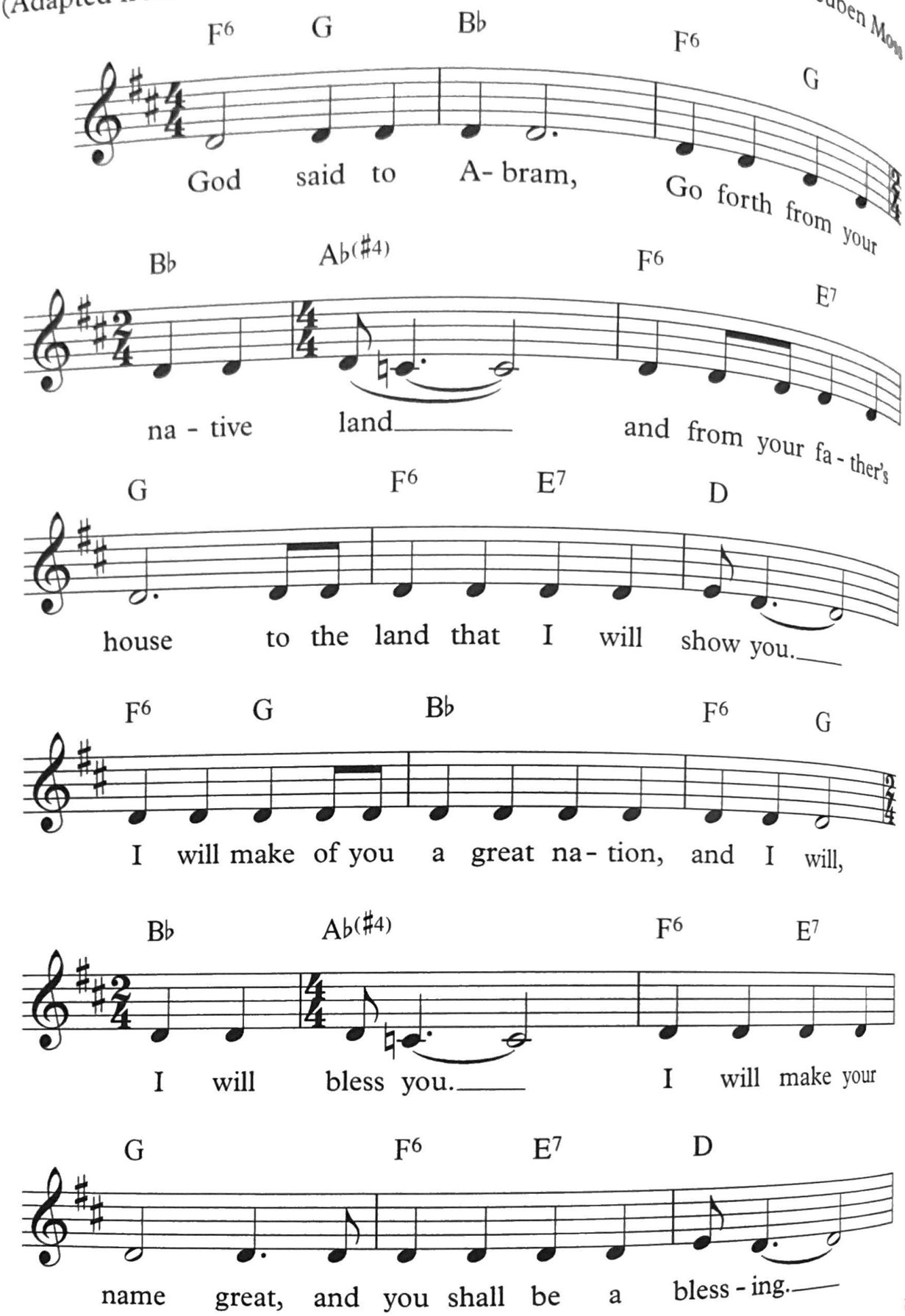
Fear not, Abram, I am a shield to you;
Your reward shall be very great.
Look toward heaven and count the stars;
So shall your offspring be.

Chorus

Music by Reuben Moss, MossBros Music BMI
Lyrics by Lisa Braver Moss (adapted from Genesis)

Lech L'cha

Lyrics by Lisa Braver Moss
(Adapted from Genesis)

Music by Reuben Moss

F6 G Bb F6 G
God said to A- bram, Go forth from your
Bb Ab(#4) F6 E7
na - tive land and from your fa - ther's
G F6 E7 D
house to the land that I will show you.
F6 G Bb F6 G
I will make of you a great na - tion, and I will,
Bb Ab(#4) F6 E7
I will bless you. I will make your
G F6 E7 D
name great, and you shall be a bless - ing.

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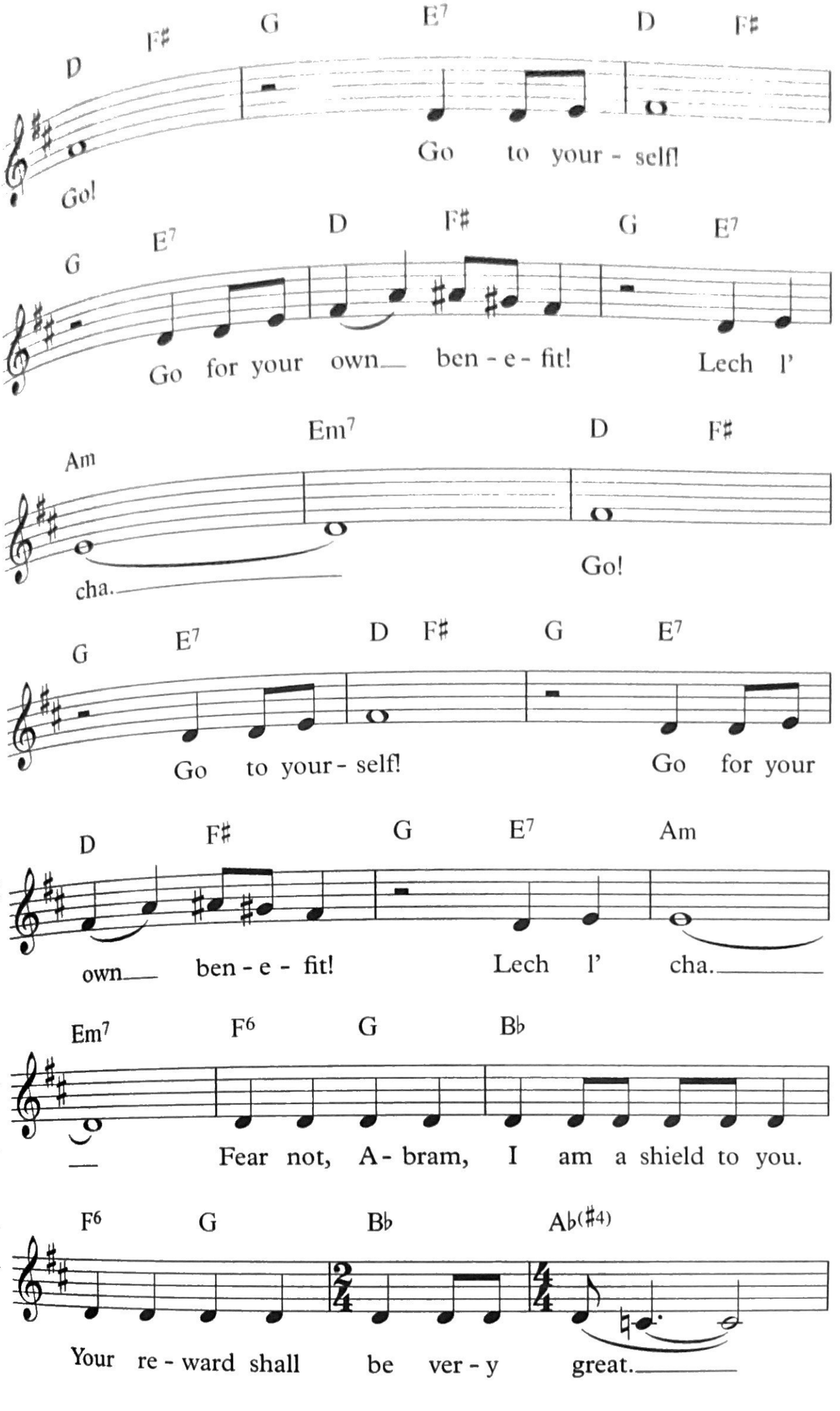
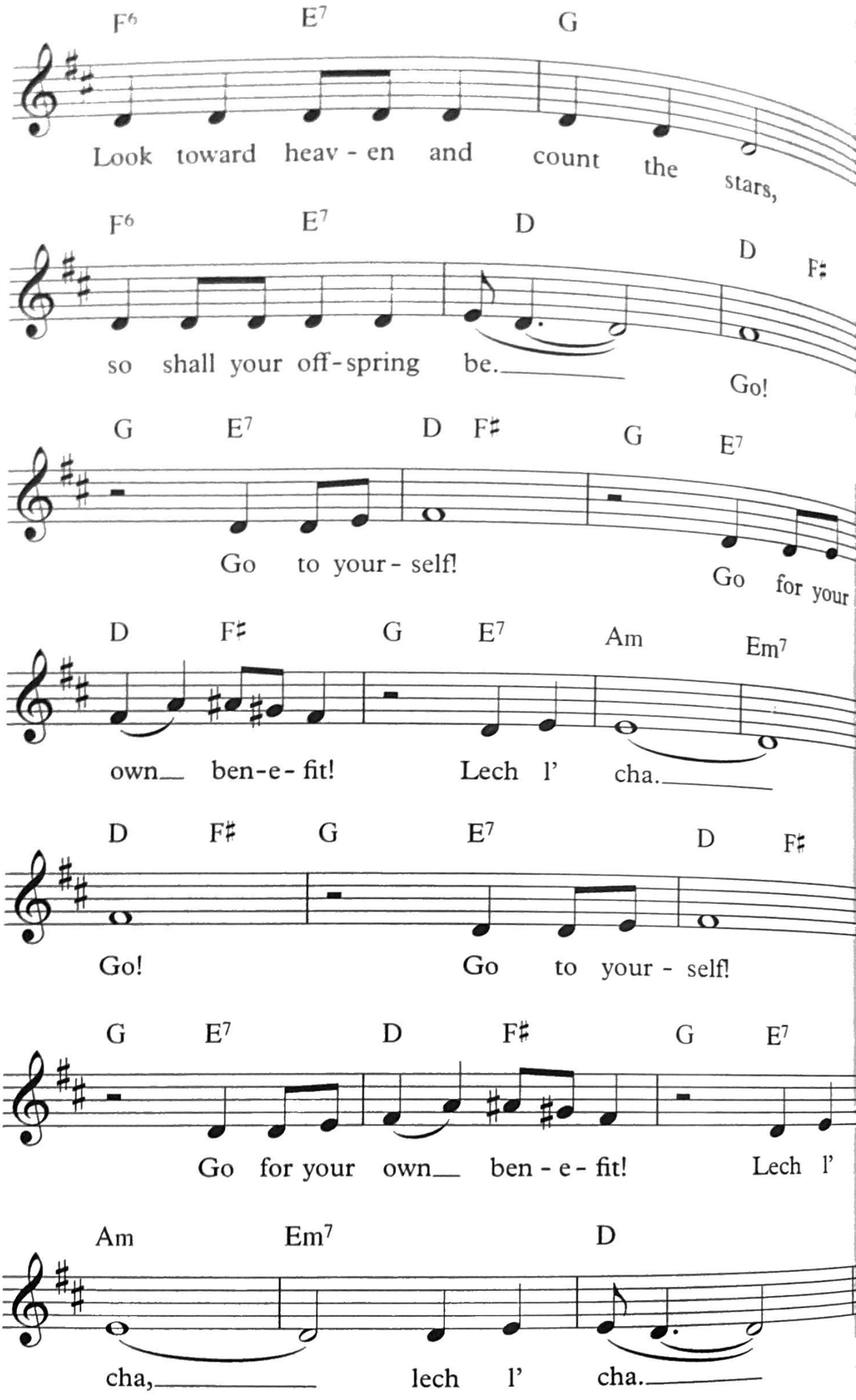

D F♯ G E7 D F♯
Go! Go to your - self!
G E7 D F♯ G E7
Go for your own ben - e - fit! Lech l'
Am Em7 D F♯
cha. Go!
G E7 D F♯ G E7
Go to your - self! Go for your
D F♯ G E7 Am
own ben - e - fit! Lech l' cha.
Em7 F6 G B♭
Fear not, A - bram, I am a shield to you.
F6 G B♭ A♭(♯4)
Your re - ward shall be ver - y great.

F6 E7 G
Look toward heav - en and count the stars,
F6 E7 D D F♯
so shall your off - spring be. Go!
G E7 D F♯ G E7
Go to your - self! Go for your
D F♯ G E7 Am Em7
own ben - e - fit! Lech l' cha.
D F♯ G E7 D F♯
Go! Go to your - self!
G E7 D F♯ G E7
Go for your own ben - e - fit! Lech l'
Am Em7 D
cha, lech l' cha.

Shalom, Shaleim

Shalom—peace—it's shin, lamed, mem,
And shin, lamed, mem is the root of *shaleim.*
With *shaleim*—completeness—we are made whole,
One with everything, *im ha-kol.*

Chorus:
Shalom, peace,
Shaleim, complete,
Not by might, nor by power.
Health, whole,
Holy, heal,
But by my spirit, says the God of Hosts.

Whole is derived from the same word as heal,
Both words convey the oneness we feel.
Holy and health are their relatives too,
Our spirits restore as our bodies renew.

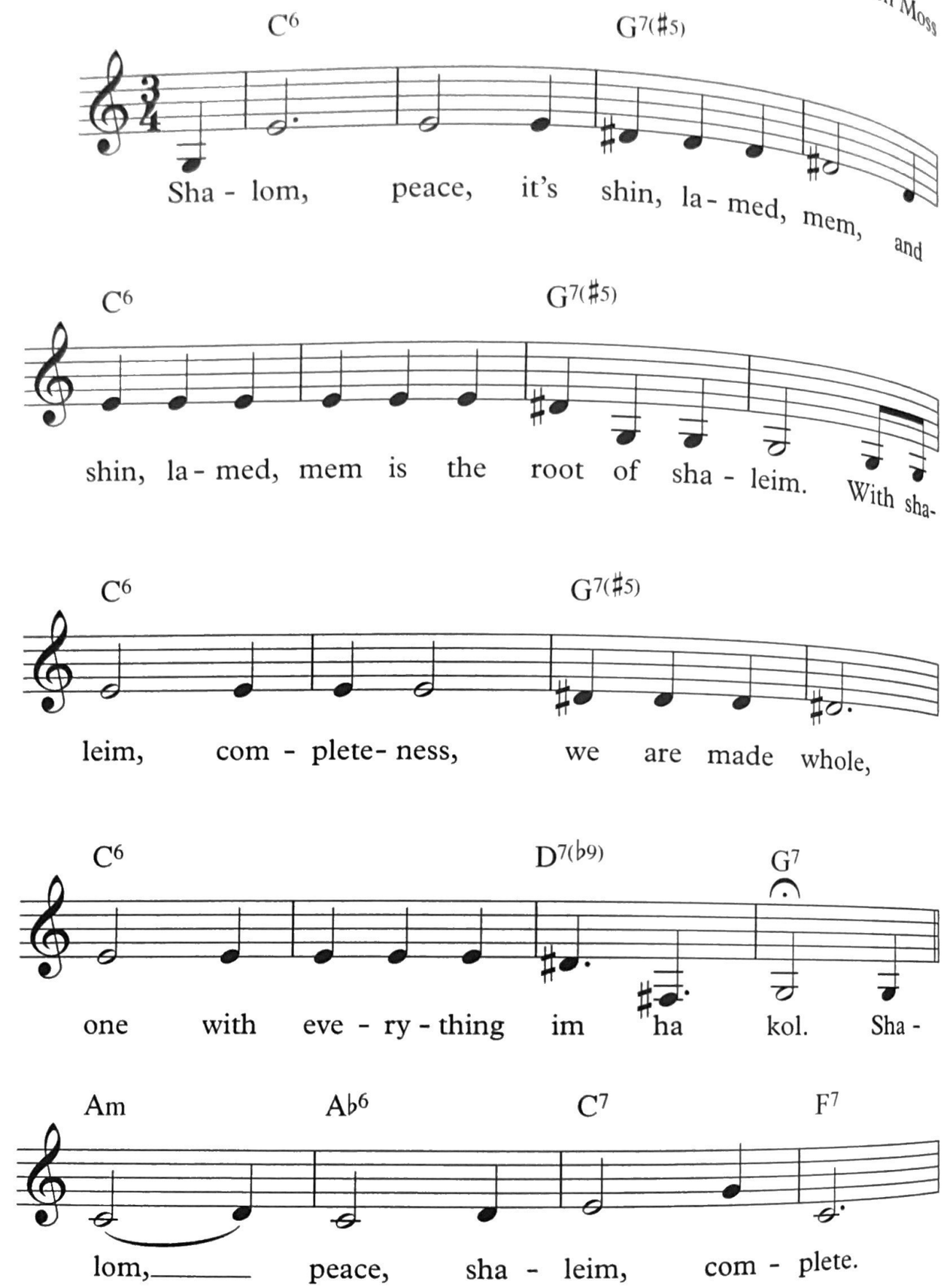
Chorus

Music by Reuben Moss, MossBros Music BMI
Lyrics by Lisa Braver Moss (and from Zechariah)

Shalom, Shaleim

Lyrics by Lisa Braver Moss
(And from *Zechariah*)

Music by Reuben Moss



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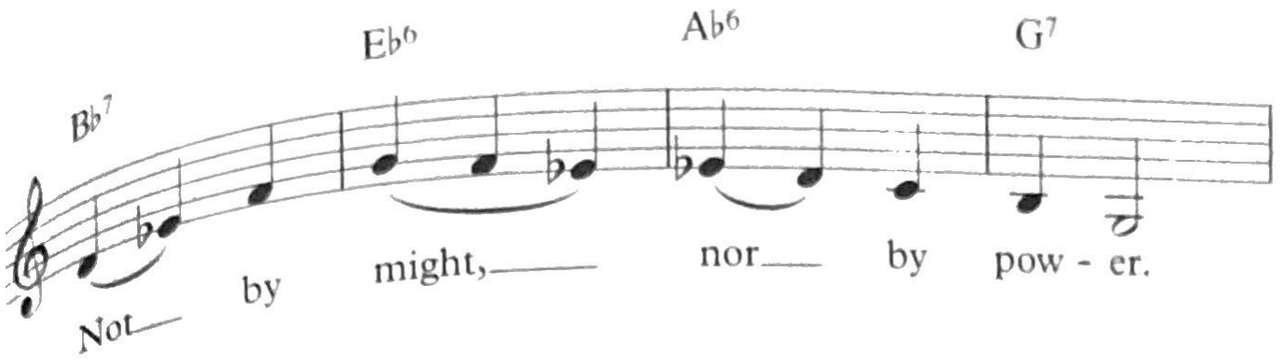
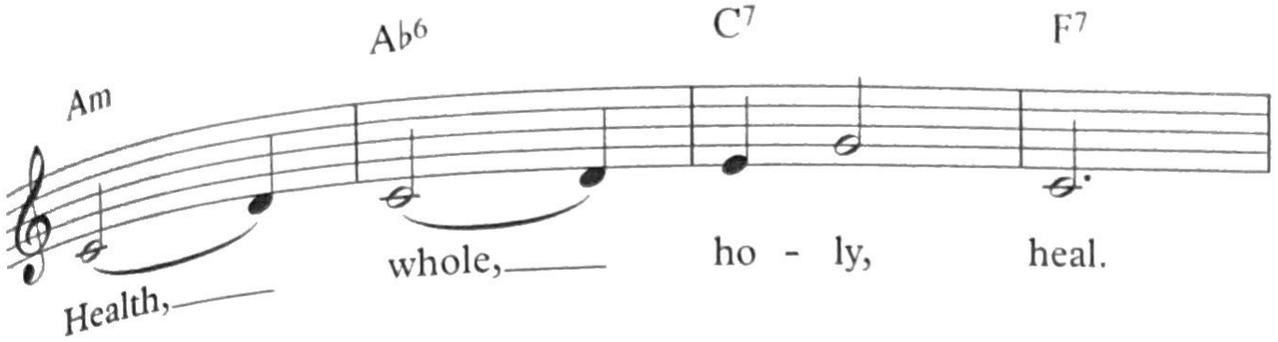
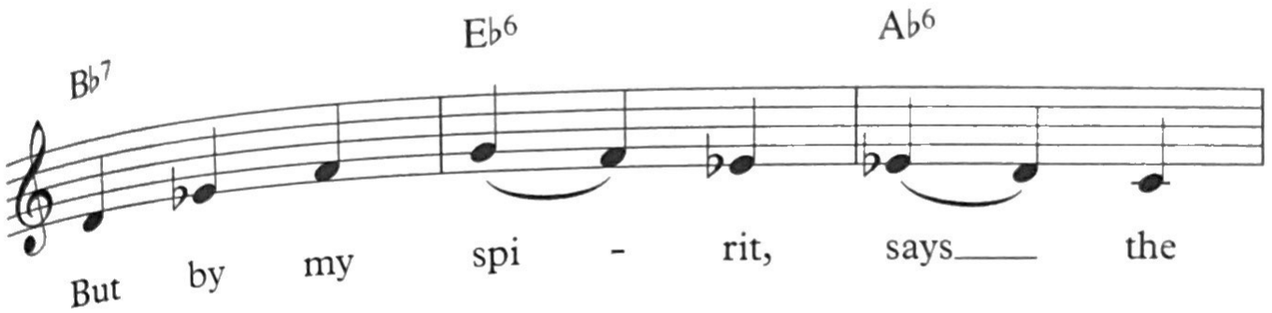
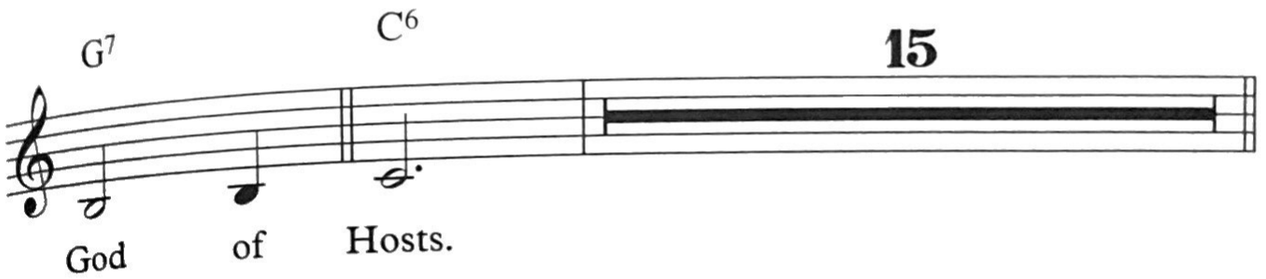
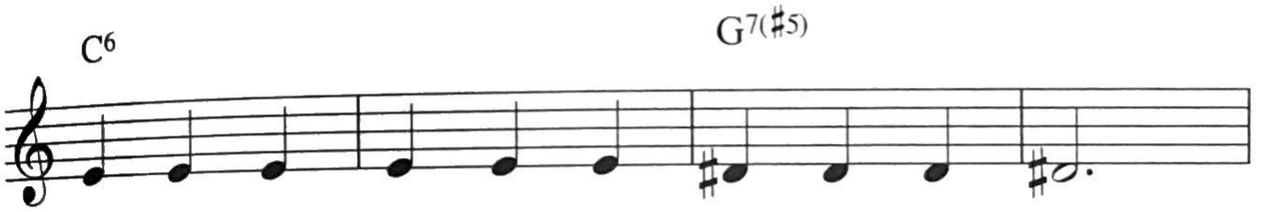
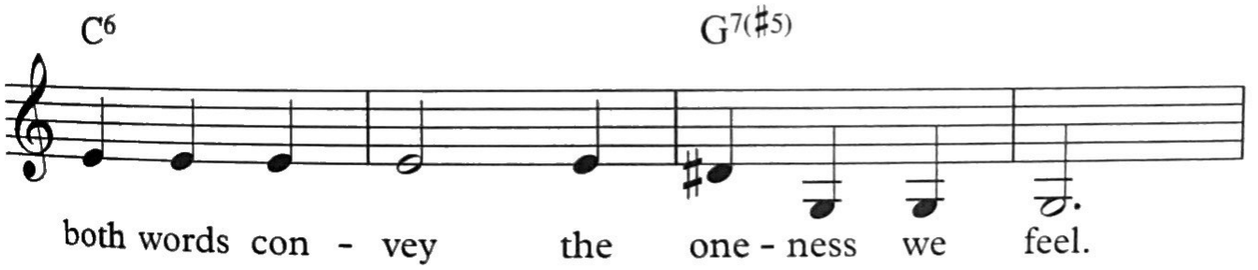
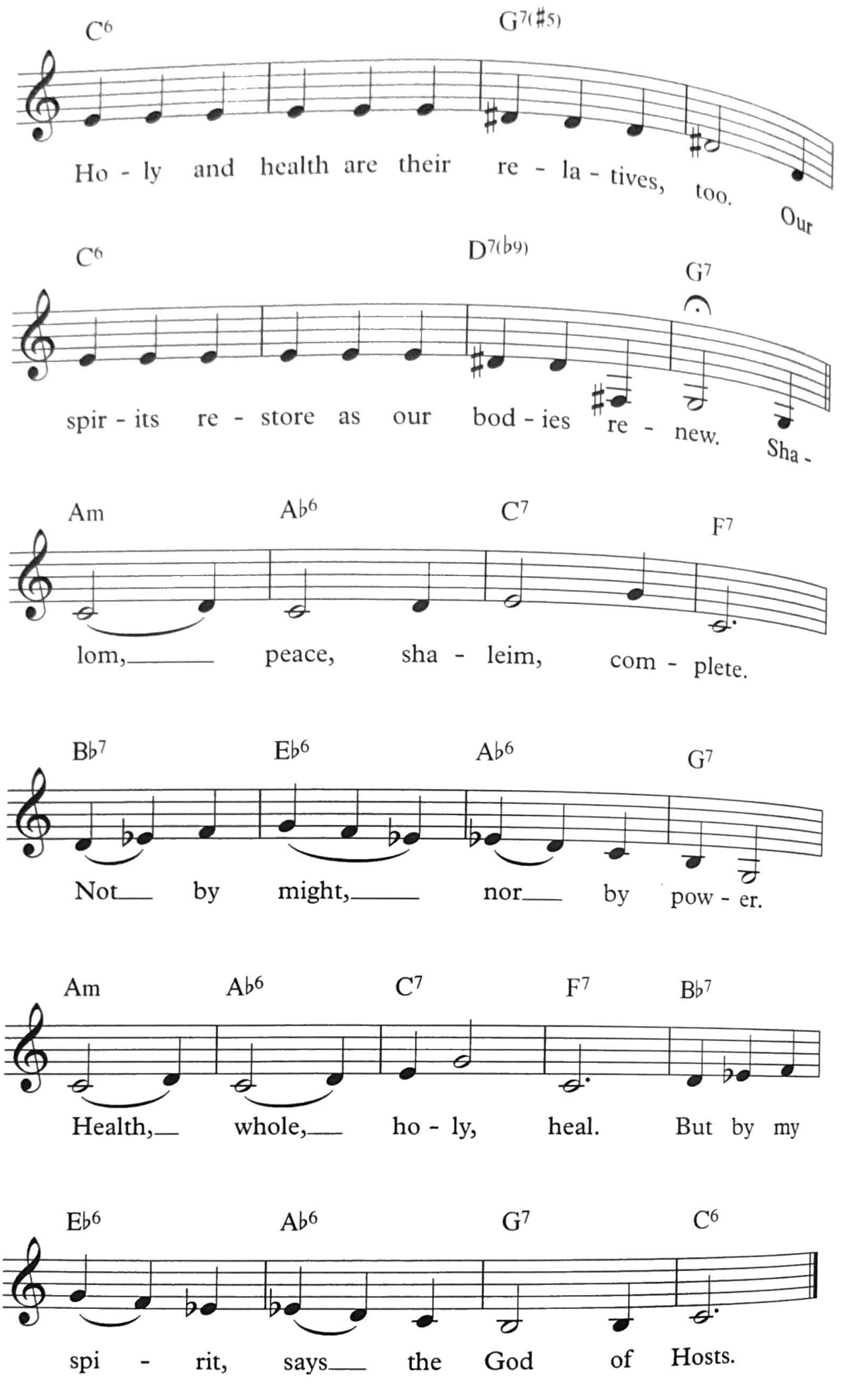

Eb6
Ab6
G7
Bb7
Not by might, nor by pow - er.


Ab6
C7
F7
Am
Health, whole, ho - ly, heal.

Eb6
Ab6
Bb7
But by my spi - rit, says the

Interlude


C6
15
G7
God of Hosts.

G7(♯5)
C6
Whole is de - rived from the same word as heal,


G7(♯5)
C6
both words con - vey the one - ness we feel.

C6
G7(#5)
Ho - ly and health are their re - la - tives, too. Our
C6
D7(b9)
G7
spir - its re - store as our bod - ies re - new. Sha -
Am
Ab6
C7
F7
lom, peace, sha - leim, com - plete.
Bb7
Eb6
Ab6
G7
Not by might, nor by pow - er.
Am
Ab6
C7
F7
Bb7
Health, whole, ho - ly, heal. But by my
Eb6
Ab6
G7
C6
spi - rit, says the God of Hosts.

Miriam and Elijah

Miriam, joyous in song and dance,
At the Nile, you guarded your brother.
Undaunted by danger, you seized the chance
To reunite baby and mother.

Miriam Haneviah, aht meh-achedet emm v'teenok [Miriam the prophet, you reunite mother and baby]. *Miriam Haneviah, Miriam Haneviah.*

Elijah, helper of those in distress,
You boldly spoke truth to power.
Our children you protect and bless,
We call upon you at this hour.

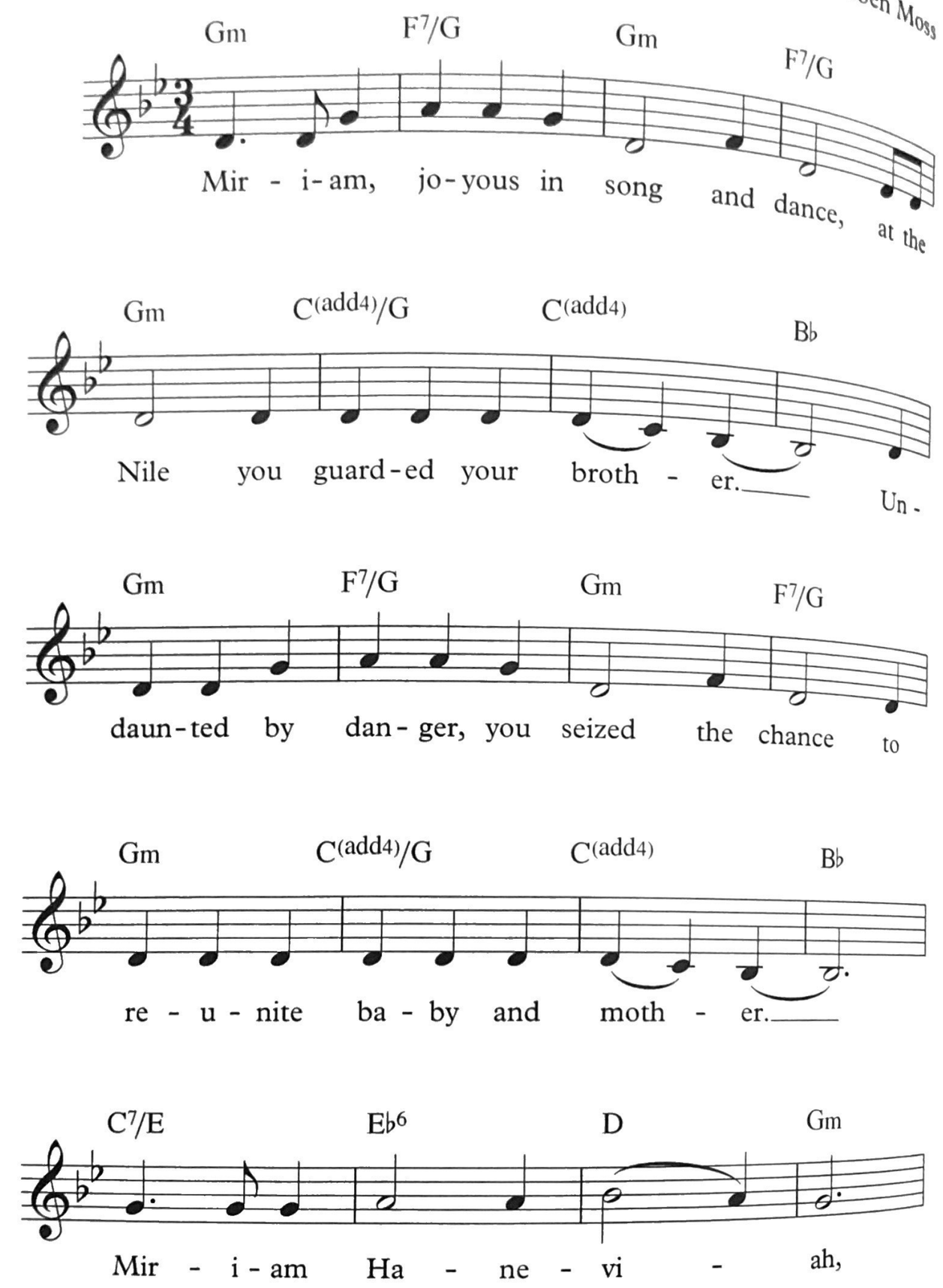
Eliyahu Hanavi, magen oom-varech yaldeinu [Elijah the prophet, protecting and blessing our children]. *Eliyahu Hanavi, Eliyahu Hanavi.*

Music by Reuben Moss, MossBros Music BMI
Lyrics by Lisa Braver Moss

Miriam and Elijah

Lyrics by Lisa Braver Moss

Music by Reuben Moss


Gm F7/G Gm F7/G
Mir - i - am, jo - yous in song and dance, at the
Gm C(add4)/G C(add4) B♭
Nile you guard - ed your broth - er. Un -
Gm F7/G Gm F7/G
daun - ted by dan - ger, you seized the chance to
Gm C(add4)/G C(add4) B♭
re - u - nite ba - by and moth - er.
C7/E E♭6 D Gm
Mir - i - am Ha - ne - vi - ah,

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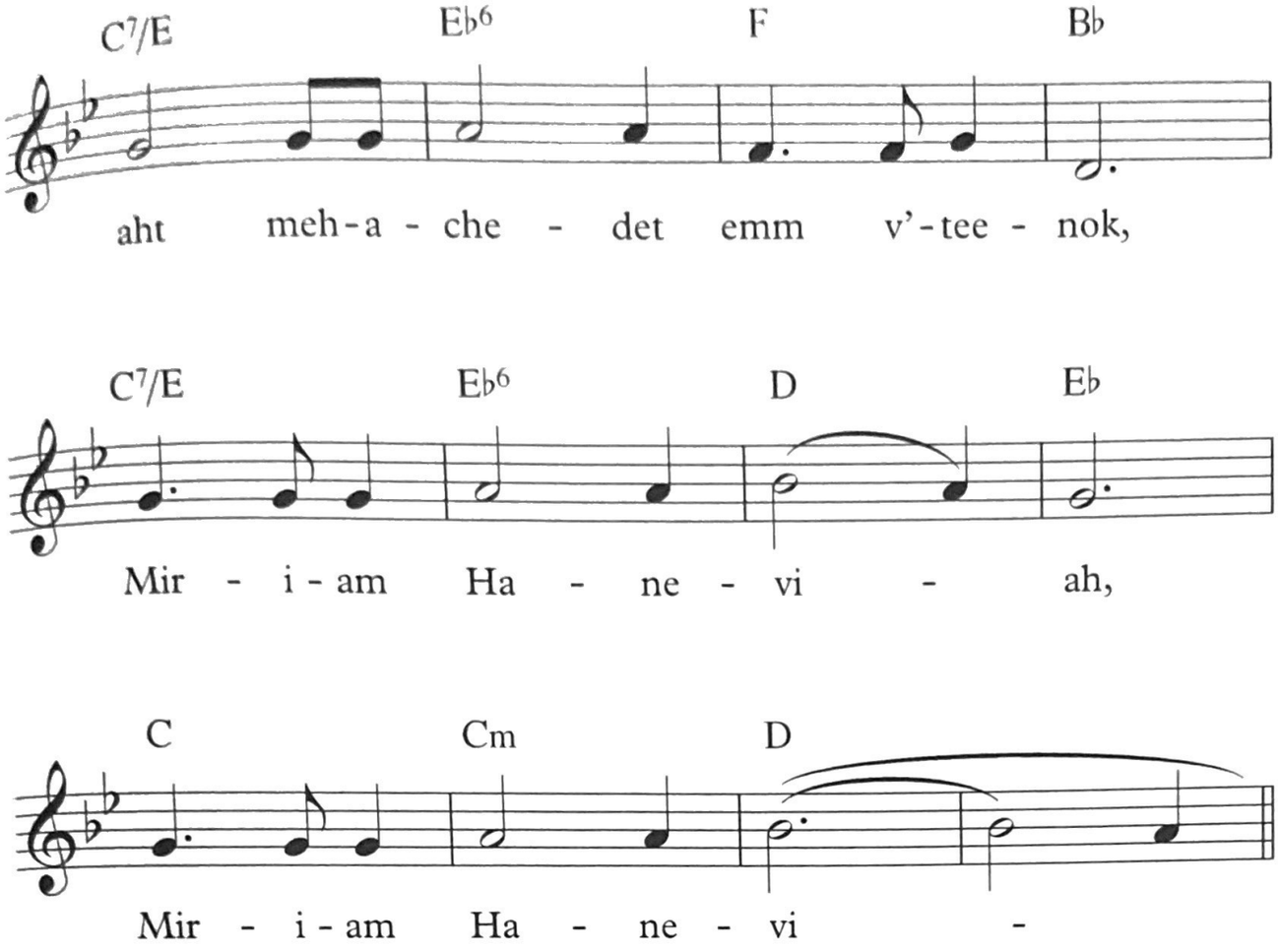
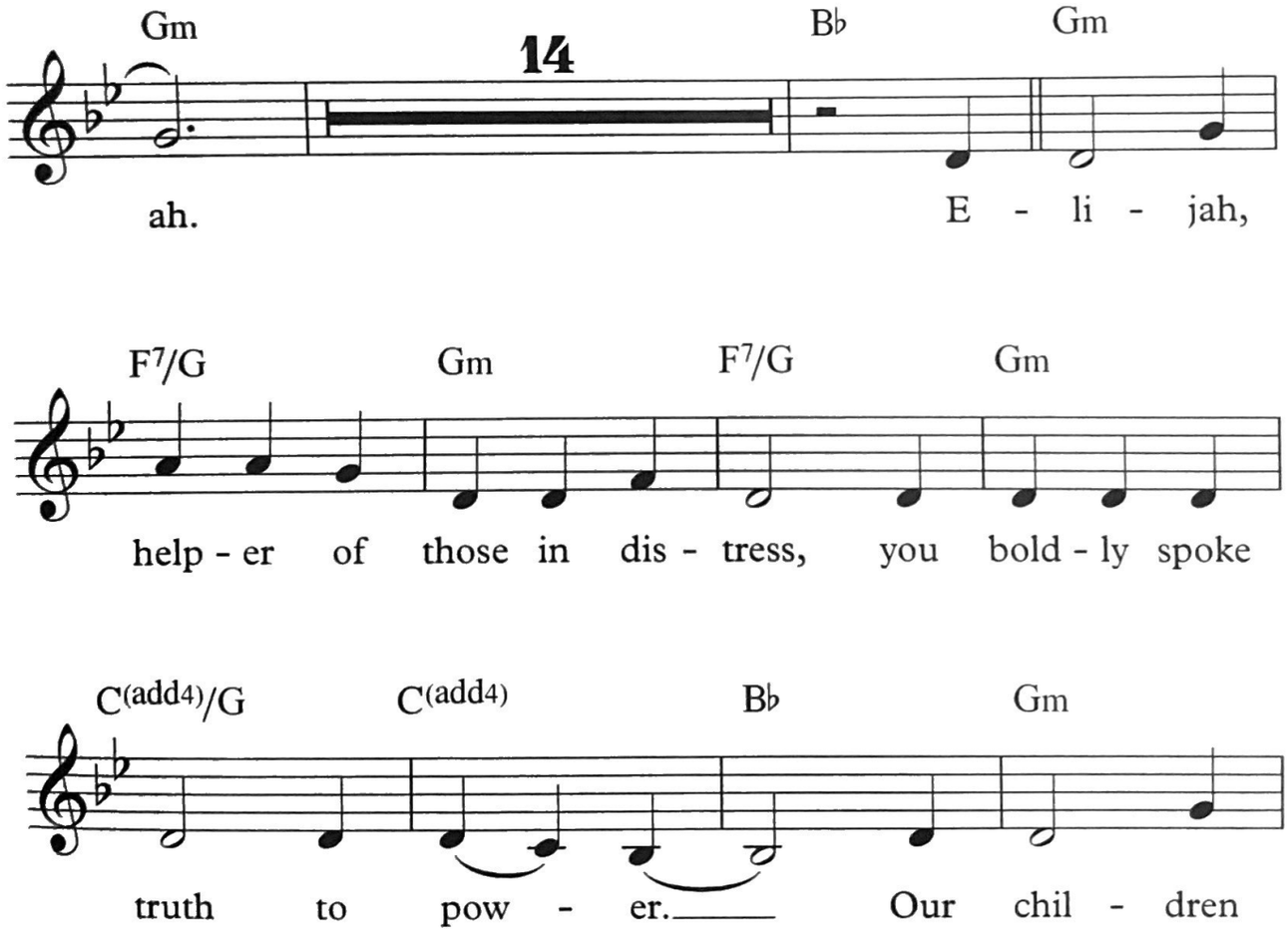
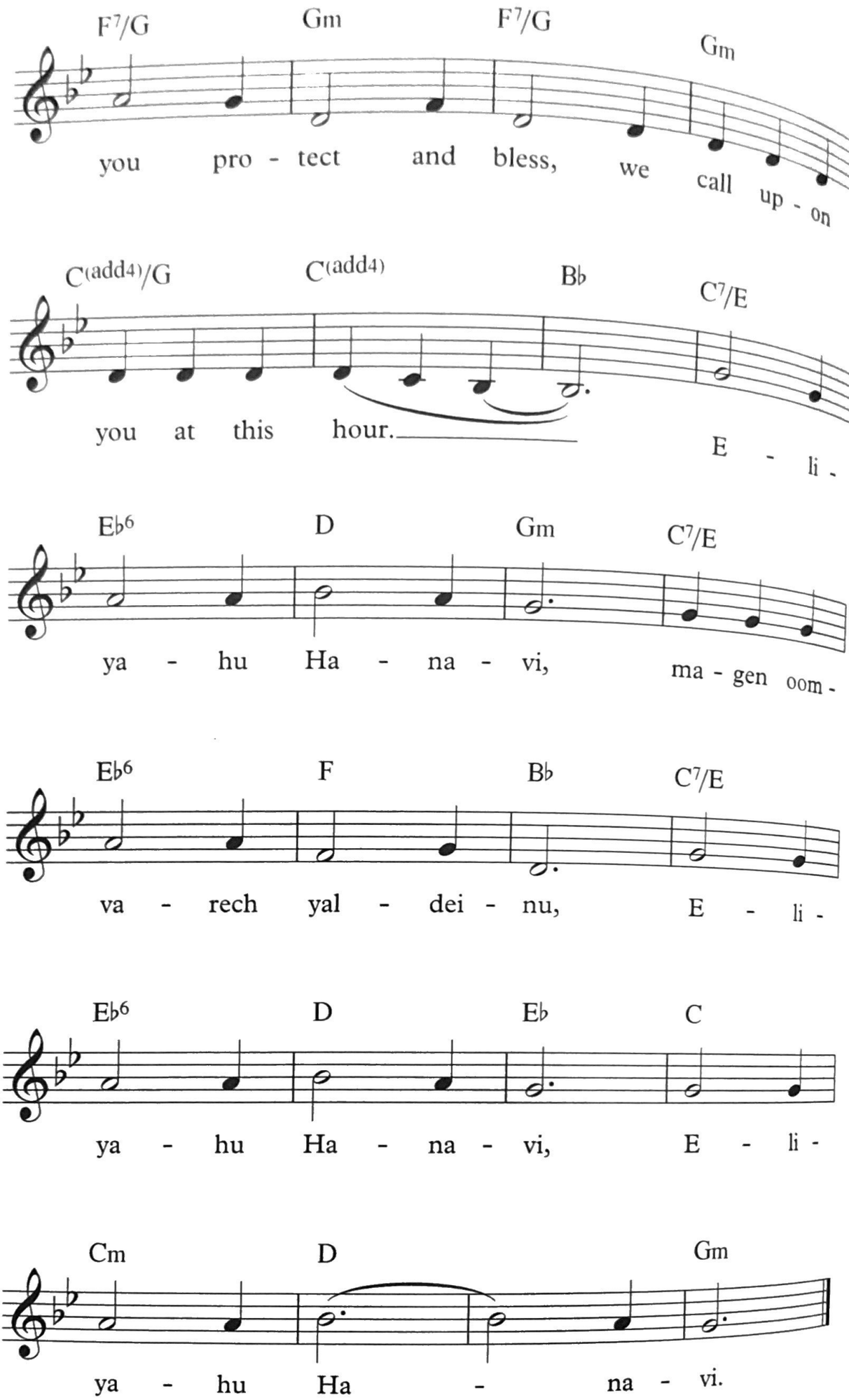

C7/E
Eb6
F
Bb
aht meh-a-che-det emm v'-tee-nok,
C7/E
Eb6
D
Eb
Mir-i-am Ha-ne-vi-ah,
C
Cm
D
Mir-i-am Ha-ne-vi-

Interlude


Gm
14
Bb
Gm
ah. E-li-jah,
F7/G
Gm
F7/G
Gm
help-er of those in dis-tress, you bold-ly spoke
C(add4)/G
C(add4)
Bb
Gm
truth to pow-er. Our chil-dren


F7/G Gm F7/G Gm
you pro - tect and bless, we call up - on
C(add4)/G C(add4) B♭ C7/E
you at this hour. E - li -
E♭6 D Gm C7/E
ya - hu Ha - na - vi, ma - gen oom -
E♭6 F B♭ C7/E
va - rech yal - dei - nu, E - li -
E♭6 D E♭ C
ya - hu Ha - na - vi, E - li -
Cm D Gm
ya - hu Ha - na - vi.

Rimonim, Rimonim (The Pomegranate Song)

Verse:

They adorned the holy temple,
They adorned the priestly gowns,
And upon the tops of Torah scrolls
You'll notice them as crowns.
They're enjoyed on Rosh Hashana,
Hang from sukkahs in the fall,
They nourished us in Egypt,
In Canaan they fed us all.
Rimonim, rimonim, rimonim, rimonim.

Verse:

They adorned the clothes of Aaron
And Judaean coins of old,
They were used for making leather,
Also medicine, we're told.
In Song of Songs, their nectar
Is the source of spi-ced wine,
Was *rimon* the tree of knowledge
On Edenic soil divine?
Rimonim, rimonim, rimonim, rimonim.

Chorus:

613, the number of your seeds,

613, commandments, good deeds.

By the bounty of your ruby beads,

Our spirit the pomegranate feeds.

Verse:

The red, rich hue of the berries

Was the color worn by kings,

At the pomegranate's pinnacle

Are the Star of David's wings.

We celebrate this sacred fruit,

A symbol through all time,

Enduring, everlasting,

Yet changing and sublime.

Rimonim, rimonim, rimonim, rimonim.

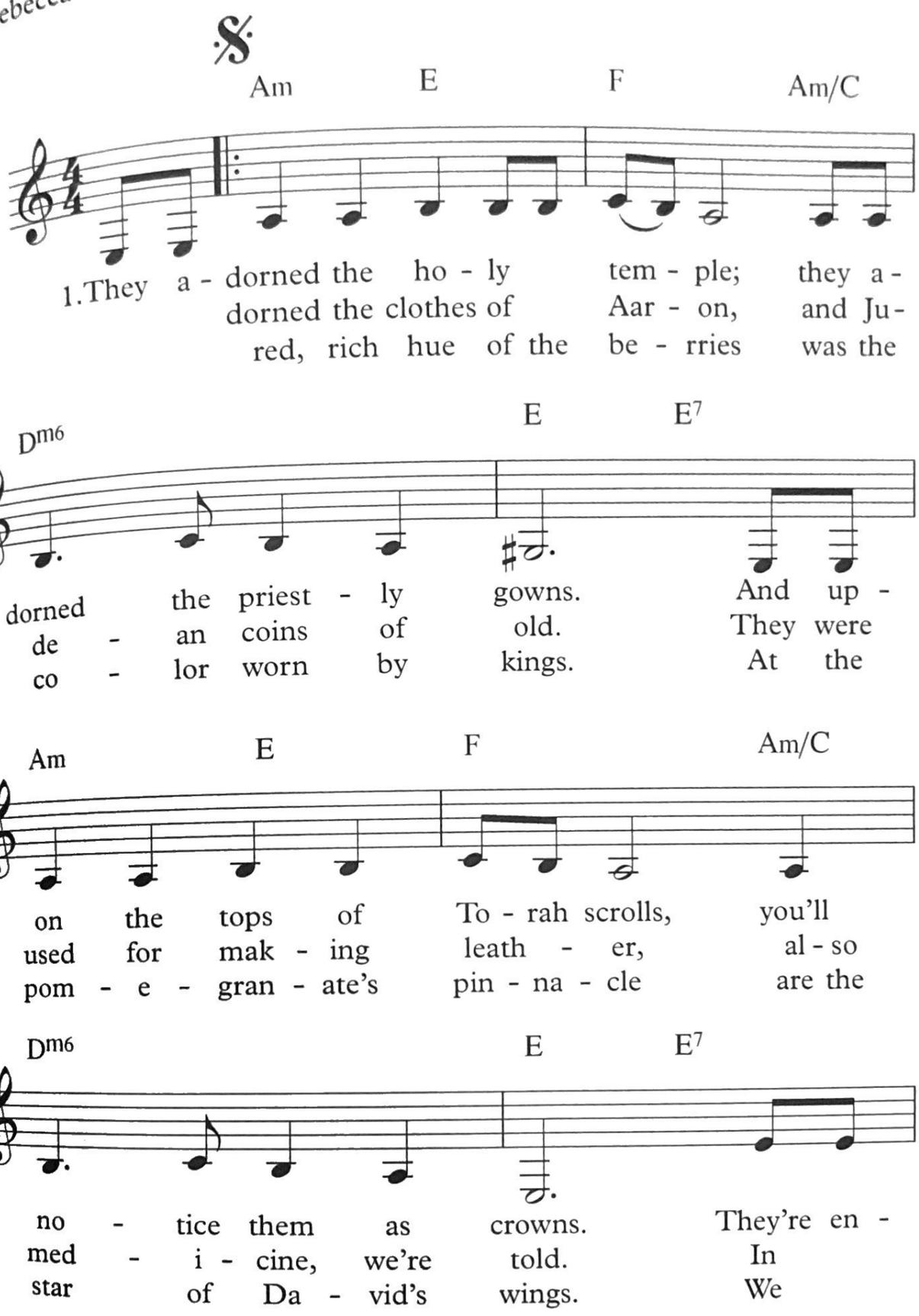
Chorus—2 x

Music by Reuben Moss, MossBros Music BMI
Lyrics by Lisa Braver Moss and Rebecca Wald

Rimonim, Rimonim

Lyrics by Lisa Braver Moss and Rebecca Wald

Music by Reuben Moss


Am E F Am/C
1.They a - dorned the ho - ly tem - ple; they a -
dorned the clothes of Aar - on, and Ju -
red, rich hue of the be - rries was the
Dm6 E E7
dorned the priest - ly gowns. And up -
de - an coins of old. They were
co - lor worn by kings. At the
Am E F Am/C
on the tops of To - rah scrolls, you'll
used for mak - ing leath - er, al - so
pom - e - gran - ate's pin - na - cle are the
Dm6 E E7
no - tice them as crowns. They're en -
med - i - cine, we're told. In
star of Da - vid's wings. We

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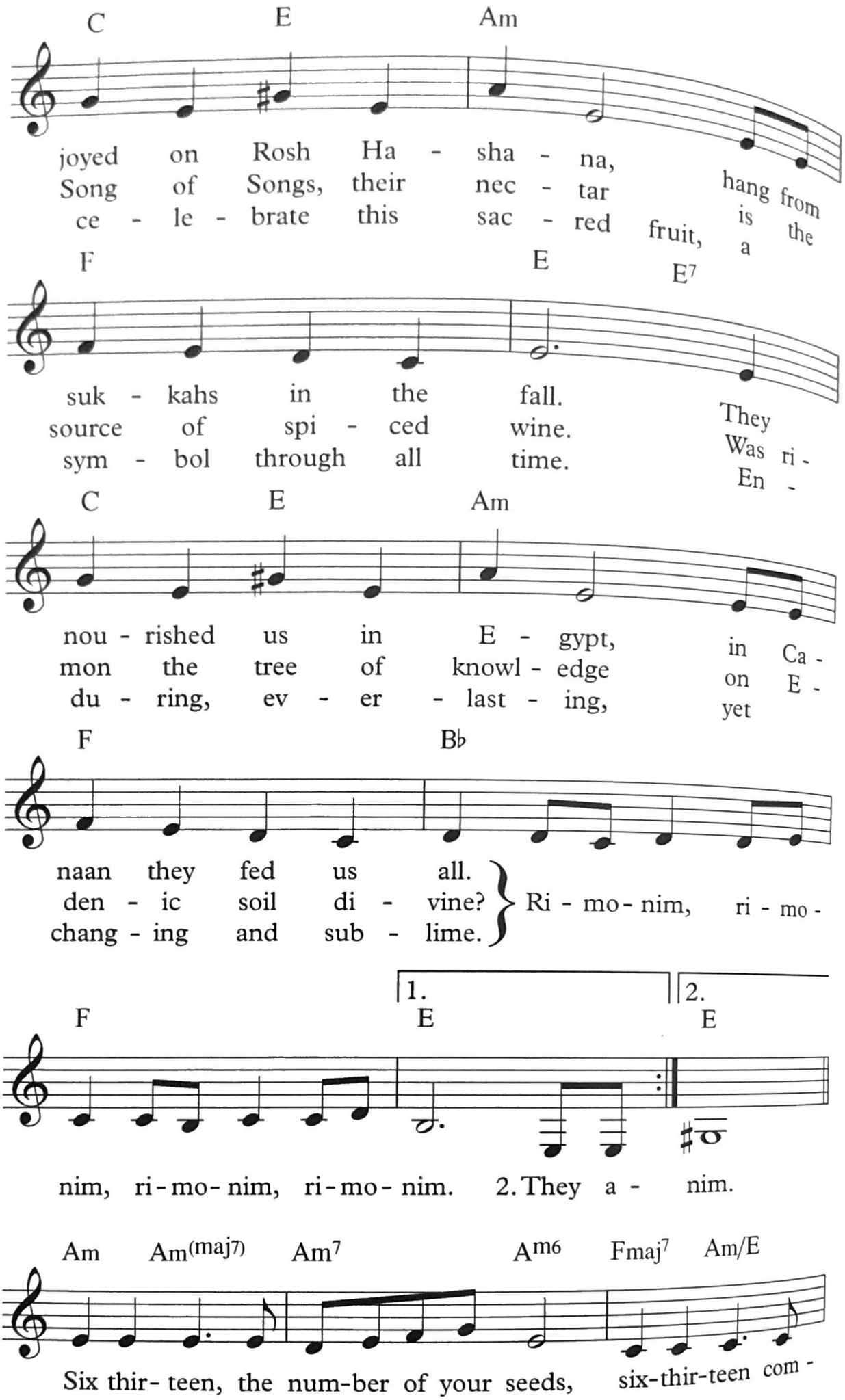
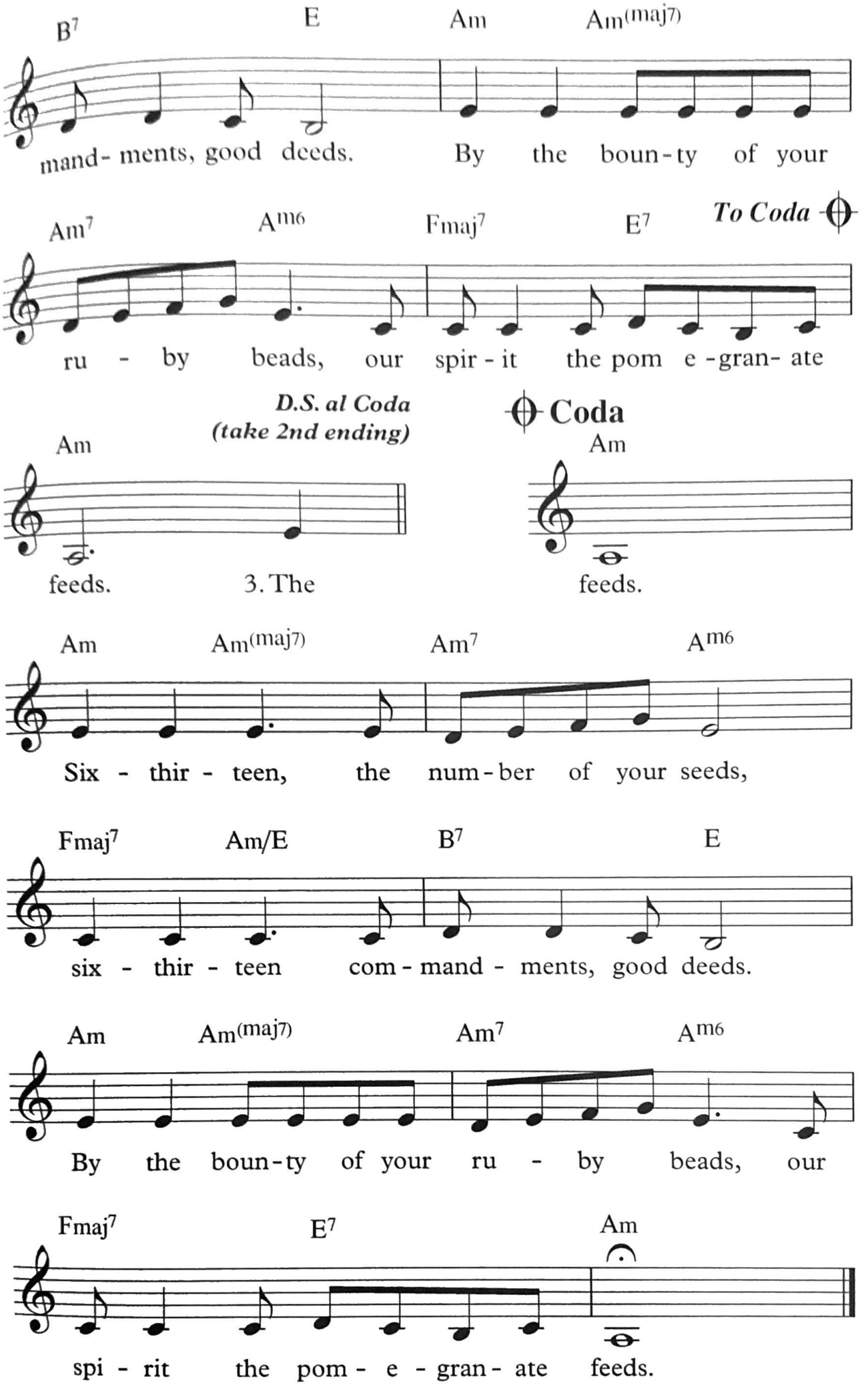

C E Am
joyed on Rosh Ha - sha - na, hang from
Song of Songs, their nec - tar is the
ce - le - brate this sac - red fruit, a
F E E7
suk - kahs in the fall. They
source of spi - ced wine. Was ri -
sym - bol through all time. En -
C E Am
nou - rished us in E - gypt, in Ca -
mon the tree of knowl - edge on E -
du - ring, ev - er - last - ing, yet
F B♭
naan they fed us all.
den - ic soil di - vine? } Ri - mo - nim, ri - mo -
chang - ing and sub - lime.
1. 2.
F E E
nim, ri - mo - nim, ri - mo - nim. 2. They a - nim.
Am Am(maj7) Am7 Am6 Fmaj7 Am/E
Six thir - teen, the num-ber of your seeds, six-thir-teen com -


B7 E Am Am(maj7)
mand- ments, good deeds. By the boun-ty of your
Am7 Am6 Fmaj7 E7 To Coda
ru - by beads, our spir - it the pom e -gran- ate
D.S. al Coda
(take 2nd ending)
Coda
Am Am
feeds. 3. The feeds.
Am Am(maj7) Am7 Am6
Six - thir - teen, the num-ber of your seeds,
Fmaj7 Am/E B7 E
six - thir - teen com - mand - ments, good deeds.
Am Am(maj7) Am7 Am6
By the boun-ty of your ru - by beads, our
Fmaj7 E7 Am
spi - rit the pom - e - gran - ate feeds.

Glossary of Terms

Abrahamic covenant The biblical covenant that Abram (later Abraham) enters into with God, in which God promises to secure the future of the Jewish people. This covenant is stated twice. In Genesis 15, the covenant does not include circumcision. In Genesis 17, the covenant acquires circumcision as a sign. Modern biblical scholarship, which views the Bible as a human-created document, offers engaging theories as to why there are two strikingly different covenant-making stories.

amidah l'b'rachot During the *bris*, the person who holds the baby for the blessings and naming.

Ashkenazi A descriptive term for the descendants of Jews who emerged from the Holy Roman Empire around the turn of the first millennium and later established communities in Central and Eastern Europe.

bar mitzvah/bat mitzvah A Jewish coming-of-age ritual typically held at age 13. Some congregations have done away with the convention of distinguishing male (bar mitzvah) and female (bat mitzvah) ceremonies, and simply call them *b'nei mitzvah* or "*mitzvah* celebrations."

bimah The central, elevated point in the synagogue, where the Torah is placed for reading.

bris Informal term used to describe the Jewish ritual that takes place on a boy's eighth day of life. *Bris* is used to denote both *brit milah* (where the boy is circumcised) and *brit shalom* (where the boy remains intact).

brit Hebrew for "covenant." It is also the more formal version of the term *bris* (above).

brit bat Hebrew for "covenant for a daughter." May also be referred to as *simchat bat,* "joy of a daughter." These naming ceremonies for baby girls serve as the female counterpart to *brit shalom* or *brit milah.*

brit ben Hebrew for "covenant for a son." See also *brit shalom.*

brit b'li milah Hebrew for "covenant without circumcision." See also *brit shalom.*

brit chayim Hebrew for "covenant of life." See also *brit shalom.*

brit milah Hebrew for "covenant of circumcision." This is the ritual during which an eight-day-old Jewish boy's foreskin is removed and he is given his Hebrew name.

brit shalom Hebrew for "covenant of peace." This is an emerging Jewish ritual that usually takes place when a boy is eight days old and does not include circumcision. During *brit shalom* the boy is formally welcomed into the Jewish community and given his Hebrew name. *Brit shalom* is sometimes referred to as a "baby naming." However, baby namings also take place for girls and for boys who have been circumcised in the hospital in the absence of ritual. For this reason, the term *brit shalom* is more descriptive than "baby naming" since it refers to a ceremony specifically for intact boys.

b'sha-ah tovah Roughly translated, it is Hebrew for "a good and successful time." This is a blessing said for a happy occasion that hasn't happened yet, often directed to a woman who is expecting a child.

cantor The person who leads the congregation in prayer along with the rabbi. He or she is usually musically trained and/or has attended cantorial school. Also called a *chazzan.*

challah A Jewish braided egg bread enjoyed on Shabbat (the Jewish Sabbath) and other special occasions.

chayim Hebrew for "life."

chuppah The canopy under which a Jewish couple stands during the wedding ceremony.

covenant A promise or agreement. In the Hebrew Bible there are many covenants between God and the Jewish people, but in common Jewish parlance, "the covenant" generally means the one between God and Abraham as described in Genesis.

intact A term used to refer to a boy or man who has not been circumcised. This term is preferable to "uncircumcised," which implies that circumcision is the norm and characterizes the natural penis in the context of the altered one.

kiddush cup A special cup, often ornamental, for *kiddush*, a blessing that is recited over wine (or grape juice) to sanctify Jewish occasions.

kisei shel Eliyahu Hebrew for "chair of Elijah." A ceremonial chair that is set aside for the prophet Elijah during *brit shalom* (or *brit milah*). Some synagogues have an ornately designed chair designated for this purpose; however, any chair may be employed.

kvatters A term with Yiddish and Hebrew roots that cannot be directly translated, it refers to the couple who carries the baby into the room where the *bris* will be held. *Kvatter* is the singular form. The *kvatters* may also be referred to and recognized as the godparents.

L'chayim Hebrew for "to life." This is traditionally said as a toast.

Lech L'cha The third of the 54 weekly portions in the yearly Torah-reading cycle. Hebrew for "go forth!" (from your homeland) or "go to/for yourself."

mazal tov Literally translated as "good luck," this term is used as a joyous exclamation of congratulations.

mitzvah Hebrew for "commandment," this word is also used to mean a good deed. The plural is *mitzvot.*

m'kor ha-chayim Hebrew for "source of life."

mohel A Jewish person who performs *brit milah. Mohalim* (the plural) may or may not have medical training.

rimonim Plural for "pomegranate" (*rimon*) in Hebrew.

sandek An honored *bris* role for an esteemed family member, often a grandparent. During *brit milah* this is the person who holds the infant on the lap while the circumcision is being performed. During *brit shalom*, the *sandek* holds the baby for part of the service.

Sephardic A general term referring to the descendants of Jewish settlers who trace their origins to the Israelite tribes of the Middle East and who lived in Spain and Portugal prior to their expulsion in the late 15th century.

shaleim Hebrew for "wholeness, completeness."

shalom Hebrew for "peace, God."

shehecheyanu Hebrew for "who has given us life," this term refers to a blessing of gratitude recited during joyous moments, such as the first night of Chanukah. The *shehecheyanu* is not said during *brit milah* because of the pain experienced by the infant. It can be said during a *brit shalom*.

"Siman Tov u'Mazal Tov" Literally translated as "good sign and good luck," this is a song sung in congratulations after a ceremony.

simchat bat Celebration for a daughter, rejoicing in a daughter; a Jewish naming ceremony for a newborn girl.

tallit A Jewish prayer shawl.

Torah The first five books of the Hebrew Bible. This word also refers to the scroll on which the Torah is written and from which it is read at synagogue services. More broadly speaking, "Torah" is the narrative of the Jewish people or the totality of Jewish law, teaching, and practice.

vav The sixth letter in the Hebrew alphabet.

Acknowledgments

This book is the result of far more than a collaboration between two writers. A great many individuals, named and unnamed, have been part of the effort, and we are deeply grateful to all who have lent their time, talents, and resources in this book's path to fruition.

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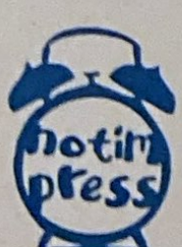

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